

## In My Dreams

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Fandom:	<a href="#">Spider-Man: Homecoming (2017)</a> , <a href="#">Spider-Man - All Media Types</a> , <a href="#">Marvel Cinematic Universe</a> , <a href="#">The Avengers (Marvel Movies)</a> , <a href="#">Marvel</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Peter Parker &amp; Tony Stark</a> , <a href="#">Peter Parker &amp; Avengers Team</a> , <a href="#">Ben Parker/May Parker (Spider-Man)</a> , <a href="#">Bruce Banner &amp; Peter Parker</a> , <a href="#">Peter Parker &amp; Natasha Romanov</a> , <a href="#">Clint Barton &amp; Natasha Romanov</a> , <a href="#">Wanda Maximoff/Vision</a> , <a href="#">Pepper Potts/Tony Stark</a>
Character:	<a href="#">May Parker (Spider-Man)</a> , <a href="#">Ben Parker</a> , <a href="#">Peter Parker</a> , <a href="#">Tony Stark</a> , <a href="#">Steve Rogers</a> , <a href="#">Natasha Romanov (Marvel)</a> , <a href="#">Bruce Banner</a> , <a href="#">James "Rhodey" Rhodes</a> , <a href="#">James "Bucky" Barnes</a> , <a href="#">Sam Wilson (Marvel)</a> , <a href="#">Clint Barton</a> , <a href="#">Vision (Marvel)</a> , <a href="#">Wanda Maximoff</a> , <a href="#">Maybe Thor later</a> , <a href="#">Thaddeus Ross</a> , <a href="#">fuck that guy - Character</a>
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## In My Dreams

by [MaryaDmitrievnaLikesSundays](#)

### Summary

Red.

Red was quite the color.

The color of love, the color of hate.

The color of glowing cheeks under a streetlight, of smiling lips and sweet rose petals. The color of a sour lollipop in a child's young hand.

The color of war, of blood, of pain. The color that plagued the nightmares of the bravest men.

Yes, red was quite a few things at once, but right now, it was the color that coated Peter Parker's hands as he stumbled away from the warm corpses of his aunt and uncle, silhouetted cruelly by the neon store signs, and into the unknown of a quiet, star-dotted night in Queens.

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Or, the homeless Peter au where civil war didn't happen, Spiderman's Identity is still a mystery, and May got shot with Ben. Enjoy.

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

## **Prologue: In My Dreams**

*Red.*

*Red was quite the color.*

*The color of love, the color of hate.*

*The color of glowing cheeks under a streetlight, of smiling lips and sweet rose petals. The color of a sour lollipop in a young child's soft hand.*

*The color of war, of blood, of pain. The color that plagued the nightmares of the bravest men.*

*Yes, red was quite a few things at once, but right now, it was the color that coated poor Peter Parker's hands as he stumbled away from the warm corpses of his aunt and uncle, silhouetted cruelly by the neon store signs, and into the unknown of a quiet, star-dotted night in Queens.*

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“Hey man, not cool!” Peter Parker called as Random Mugger Number Eighty-Three slashed open the flesh on Peter’s left forearm, and the suit with it, inviting the biting air in to mingle with the warm flow of blood. The overbearing sting was a familiar one, if stronger than normal.

That would leave a mark.

Fortunately, now the guy’s knife was gone, and it only took a sweep under his feet and one well-aimed punch before he was webbed up and Peter was swinging his way back home, his wound screaming in protest.

*Home, Sweet Home* Peter thought bitterly as his feet touched the grime-coated concrete of Queen’s Best Alley. He flopped to the ground with a hiss of pain. He adjusted himself until his back was against the dirty wall, one leg bent and the other straight out in front of him.

He turned to check his wound, and was pleased to see that the skin was already painfully knitting itself together. Yesterday's banana must have jump started his healing some.

Even so, he sprayed a web over the wound to protect it from the bacteria that lurked on his 'bed' of cardboard and discarded blankets.

With a loud huff, Peter rolled over to crawl his way onto it, careful not to jostle his left arm too much—just because it was healing didn't mean it didn't still burn.

Patrolling the full day had left him exhausted, and he told himself that he'd take a break tomorrow. The same lie he'd told himself for the past seven-hundred-and-sixty-eight days, since the reddest night on record.

He had run from the horrific scene outside of the convenience store over two years ago, his thirteen-year-old hands stained with blood, and had never gone home again. He hadn't gone back to school, either. All his ties were cut. Spider-Man was a full time job, now, and to whoever it concerned, Peter Parker no longer existed. Maybe he never did.

He was asleep before his head even hit the worn yellow backpack he used as a pillow.

## Shadows Call

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

*"It appears that, yet again, the vigilante known as Spider-Man has evaded the NYPD. Will we ever catch him? Or will he continue to terrify and terrorize the citizens of Queens, New York? More at ten, and now on to—"*

The television shut off with a click.

Tony Stark, who had been idly stirring his steaming coffee and staring at the blank white wall in front of him, complained, “Hey, I was listening to that.”

“And we were watching it,” continued Wanda incredulously from where she leaned into Vision’s shoulder.

Someone scoffed, and a remote control slid over the granite countertop and into Tony’s field of vision. He looked up to see Steve’s form staring down at him from across the counter, his arms folded and face pinched, clearly ignoring everyone’s comments.

“Yes?” Tony huffed.

“What are we gonna do about this guy?” Steve asked.

Tony laughed humorlessly and stood, taking his black coffee to the couch, between Wanda and Rhodey. “There’s not much we can do,” he said as he plopped onto the soft fabric. “And it’s not like the dude’s a menace or anything. Last time I checked, he just saves kittens from trees and goes home.”

“Tony,” Steve’s hard voice warned from where he had been left.

“I know,” Tony sighed, rubbing his free hand down his face.

And it was true. He did know. He knew that, in order to prevent ripping the Avengers apart, they had to create the Sokovia Compromise; a set of accords that almost satisfied both parties. And he knew that they stated that every person that intended to act as a hero, enhanced or otherwise, had to give the federal government their identity, name, face, and all.

And Spider-Man was breaking that rule with every second that he helped.

"But what are we going to do?" Clint butted in from where he played Go Fish with Sam and Natasha. "It's not like we can kidnap him. He's sneaky."

"You caught me," Natasha shrugged as she threw a card down. "Go Fish, Sam."

Sam threw his hands up and groaned. "Why do I play with you guys? Why do I play with spies?"

Clint shrugged and continued. "I caught you because you left a trail of assassinations wherever you went. This guy doesn't really do that. Plus, he has superpowers."

Natasha's head perked up. She dropped her cards and stood from her rickety seat, her dark eyes widening with as much realization as someone with her emotional capacity could give. "Wait, what if that's how we find him?"

Steve shifted. "What do you mean?"

"*I mean*," she explained, shaking her hands out, "if we find out what his powers are, we can find out what his weaknesses are, too."

Everyone stared at her. No one said anything.

"Like how Steve is super strong but because of it he can't get drunk," she clarified. "If he's got super powers, we can use them against him." A chorus of *oh's* sounded throughout the room.

Tony chugged the last of his coffee and remarked, "Genius. But how are we going to observe him if no one else has even been able to follow him?"

Natasha's eyes glimmered as she looked to Clint, who was lifting a band-aid covered hand to stifle his yawn.

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"They aren't spies."

Peter woke up with the Sun to hunger pangs so strong he felt like he might be sick. But he'd been having such a lovely dream of launching himself through the city, people waving and cheering below him as he flipped through the skies and swung around buildings. The day was cloudless and not too cold, but not so hot that his spandex suffocated him. Just a bright, carefree, Something-that-might-have-happened-before-the-red kind of day.

But his stomach contracted again, and Peter sat up with a groan. "Alright, alright," he told his unreasonable organ, slipping his shoes on and squinting against the bright morning light.

He took a moment to pause and check on his left arm. It didn't hurt any more, and when he rolled up his sleeve, he saw nothing more than a thin white line in place of the gruesome cut that should have been there. Thank God for supernatural healing.

He changed into his civilian shirt and pants, bought at the Local High End Dumpster and washed monthly with spare change, shrugged a torn jacket on over it all, and set off towards his own personal ATM.

This ATM, which was put on the busiest street corner he could find, was not so much an ATM as a vending machine, where one could pay two dollars and get a signed photo of Spider-Man, courtesy of the hero himself and his barely-functioning Polaroid camera. It was built from a combination of old computer parts and scrap metal. Not many actual New Yorkers bought anything, but it was an easy tourist trap and gave him just enough to survive. Most days.

Peter sighed as he unscrewed the money slot, made of a special screw only he knew how to undo. He pulled out the various crumpled bills and coins and counted a total of twenty-eight dollars.

"Okay," he whispered to himself. He'd have to make do with that for the next seven days. Payday once a week, just like a real job.

That's what he told himself, at least.

In the next hour, Peter ate a stale bagel for his daily meal, sewed up his suit with some thread from his supply, changed into it, took four pictures from impossible places for his vending machine, and stopped two early-morning muggings.

Then, while the Sun climbed higher into the sky, he felt someone watching him swing. He heard...footsteps. Not the usual kind that added to the thunder of New York City, but rhythmic, light, as if whoever made them was trying their hardest to be silent. And they were following him.

Right. He had to go.

Peter whipped his body around mid-air and made a sharp right, then a left, then up and down and back around a few more times, trying to keep the buffeting wind from blowing him off of his webs and into the streets, all while listening out for these footsteps among a sea of others.

The footsteps persisted far longer than he had expected, but landing back in his cozy little alley, he strained his ears as hard as he could, and thankfully heard nothing. Good. He didn't need anyone taking him in now; he'd made it two years on his own already.

Peter decided to take a short break and sat down slowly, hissing as his various bruises were prompted, and checked his web fluid storage. His meter told him that he was about three webs from empty.

He sighed yet again. It was going to be another long day.

#### Chapter End Notes

Wowza fun times!!!!

Anyways constructive criticism is always appreciated!!!! I want this to be as fun to read as it is to write

# **There's a Light at the End of a Hall**

## Chapter Notes

HhhhgGhHghhggg

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“This is useless!” Natasha yelled, stomping out of the elevator in full spy-gear. “I can’t follow him! He always gets away!”

She threw herself onto a barstool and put her head in her hands. Clint awkwardly patted her on the shoulder, abandoning his cheap slice of pizza.

”What happened?” Steve asked coolly from where he sat by the grand windows, watching the Sun go down. They were the only three in the room. Everyone else was training, asleep, or trying to scope out whoever the hell that new weapons dealer was and how to stop them.

Natasha lifted her head and swept some hair out of her face, trying to regain her composure. “I don’t know,” she explained. “It’s like Spider-Man always knows when I’m following him. All day he managed to beat me. Any number of people can pass by but the second *I* try to watch him he leaves!”

Clint shrugged. “Maybe you’re being too obvious.”

“How?” She asked. “I’m doing my best to disappear. It’s my job.”

Clint continued, revisiting his greasy slice of pepperoni. “Maybe he can tell when someone’s out of place. You’re in full spy clothes and trying to be invisible. Maybe you should try just blending in, you know? Be normal.”

Natasha looked down at her body, and realized that she wasn’t being too conspicuous, clad in black leather and knives as she was.

”So what do you propose I do?”

Clint gestured to his plate, which now held nothing more than bread crumbs. “I’m out of pizza. Let’s go get more.”

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“Clint, it’s been, like, three hours. I think he’s done for the day.”

Natasha and Clint sat on the edge of a small fountain, a medium pizza from some chincy shop in Queens sitting open and half eaten between them. They sat in front of a small school, Midtown something-or-other, which had closed hours before. She watched as people of every shape and size and color strode past. Some held shopping bags, other screaming children. None speared them even a passing glance.

Clint shook his head, reaching for his fourth slice. “Nope. He’s always out. He’s probably just in another part of the city.”

“Then why are we here?”

“Because if he is, then by now he’s swept the rest of the area, so he’ll be here soon anyways.”

“That’s Stupid.”

As if on cue, a blur of blue and red soared over the pairs’ heads, landing almost silently on the school grounds. No one seemed to notice him but them. Natasha shifted subtly so she could see him out of her peripheral vision, but pretended to start a conversation with Clint about the newest episode of *The Bachelor*.

She watched as Spider-Man crept towards the entrance, but as he was climbing the stairs to the doorway, he managed to slip out of her frame of view.

“Hey, we’re out of pizza,” she said loudly, standing up and taking the still-full box in her hands. “I’m gonna go get some more, okay?” Thankfully, Clint got the message and didn’t protest, instead taking out his phone and pretending to fiddle with it.

She turned and walked in the general direction of the school, making sure to keep her eyes forward but Spider-Man in her peripheral. Just when she thought he'd turn the door handle and walk in, he shifted to the left and began scaling the wall.

Natasha thought it was odd enough to mention to Clint, who no doubt could no longer see what was happening, and touched her finger to her ear as her comm crackled to life.

From two hundred yards away, Spider-Man stiffened. His head shot up and whipped around. Natasha lowered her hand back to the pizza box, playing it off as fixing her hair, and fought to keep her pace normal.

Even so, Spider-Man has clearly realized he was being watched. He climbed quicker than she'd ever seen him do on the news to the top of the building, lept into a nearby tree, and just like that, he was gone.

Natasha could have screamed in frustration, but instead she turned on her heel and stomped back towards Clint.

He lifted his head as she approached, tossing the box into his lap and using his shirt to wipe her grease-soaked hands.

"Find anything?" He murmured.

"No," she grumbled and sat back down on the cold concrete. "I saw him scale the school building some and thought I'd tell you, but right when I turned my comm on he noticed me and ran!"

Clint hummed curiously.

"What?" She asked. When he didn't answer straight away, she continued, "Come on, stop pretending to be smart and tell me."

"Well," he started, "He has super strength and speed, right?"

She nodded.

Clint continued, “What if he has super hearing, too?”

“What do you mean?” She pressed.

“Our comes make a noise. He could have heard it.”

“No way,” she laughed. “He was almost a quarter mile away from me!”

Clint turned to look her straight in the eye, and Natasha saw an intensity in the hard line of his mouth that was rare for him. She was almost taken aback.

“He has super powers, Nat. We don’t know what he’s capable of. That’s why we’re here.”

Natasha sighed, disgruntled, and stood, motioning for Clint to do the same. They turned and started for the nearest subway station.

“We’ll ask Bruce,” she said as they descended underground. “Him and Tony designed those, if anyone will know, it’s him.”

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Peter heard a crackle, then a high-pitched humming from behind him, almost lost among the sea of voices. He sharply swiveled his head, fighting down panic and sweeping his eyes over all the people from where he was cloaked by shadows. Everyone looked normal, but that sound was definitely not. At the same time, his senses flared; someone was watching him again.

This time, Peter didn’t try to throw them off. He instead bolted to the rooftop and flung himself into the nearest tree, then the next, then further and further until the trees ran out.

Landing once again in his filthy little alley, Peter ripped his mask off and threw it to the ground, trying to hold back his frustrated tears. Thursday was the only night of the week that Midtown

students were all at home, with no clubs or rehearsals set up. Now he'd have to wait another week at least to restock his web fluid supply.

(And yes, he knew stealing chemicals from the science department was wrong, but he needed to stay Spider-Man, so he needed his webs. Besides, he'd saved half of those students once or twice, anyways, he was sure.)

"Okay," he breathed to the empty night air. "Okay."

A week with no webs. If he dared to break in over the weekend, still, it would be a couple of days.

He'd survive, though. He always did.

Peter laid down on his bed and stared into the night sky, praying to the stars that he could make it a week as Peter Parker.

*Not that I can even see the stars, he thought as his eyelids dropped closed. Light pollution is a bitch.*

#### Chapter End Notes

HGGHHHGHGHGHGFHHGFHH

## Then My Dreams

### Chapter Notes

Me writing scenes including multiple key characters: whose point of view is this in? Is it omniscient? Does it switch??? Hell if I know!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As it turns out, Peter Parker could not, in fact, survive a full week as Peter Parker. For nearly three days he sat alone on various rooftops, anxiety coursing through his veins and making his fingertips vibrate. He winced every time someone screamed, wishing he could abandon puny Parker and go help. He knew what would happen if he tried, though; on Friday, he tried to patrol without his webs and ended up shattering the railing he gripped when he had to re break his own right arm so the bone would set correctly.

So on Saturday, Peter pushed down his guilt in favor of cold courage and slid into Mrs. Mathur's old classroom (*room 326, honors chemistry*, the door read). He cringed as the window squeaked open, even though it had every other time he had...borrowed from her storage closet. His feet echoed with every step, but he made it in and out with every chemical he needed without turning on a single light.

He hardly remembered the mixing process; he let his fingers do the work while his mind drifted off to other places. He couldn't help but think about who could have been following him, and what they possibly could have wanted. He hadn't broken any laws, had he? At least, none with malicious intent.

He dwelled on the idea of social services for a moment, but why would they follow Spider-Man? No one knew his identity, so it must have been someone who cared about what he did as a vigilante rather than a human being.

Maybe it was a recruitment? But what team would want some local hero? Clearly no good one, but wouldn't they have to be good for them to send what seemed like a professional spy?

So someone was clearly trying to take him, but they didn't know about his powers, aside from the obvious ones. Even so, whoever they were, they were damn good at their job, that he could tell. They had comms, spies, and definite formal training, but probably bad intentions. No one that impressive could possibly think of Spider-Man as a good resource.

And yet it didn't seem they wanted to take him immediately; they just wanted to watch. For now. So were they mad scientists? Corrupted soldiers? Workers for someone with a grudge?

He sighed defeatedly; there was no way to know. He'd just have to keep his guard up for the foreseeable future. Otherwise, he could end up strapped down to a metal table while sadistic chemists sliced his arms to test his blood or stabbed his thighs to observe his healing.

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Shaking the thought out of his head, Peter refilled his web shooters with his new solution, hiding the left over chemicals beneath seemingly random heaps of garbage and cardboard. He wasted no time donning the suit and mask, and within seconds, he was off once again, this time towards a place he'd seen a strange beacon of purple light the day before.

Natasha practically stormed into Bruce's room, since he definitely wasn't off in space stuck as the Hulk at the moment. She threw open the door, clearly startling him out of sleep, Clint close on her heels and trying to slow her down.

He should have known by now that it wouldn't work.

Bruce nearly jumped out of his skin and instinctively pulled his blankets up over his chest, even though he was fully clothed. "N-Natasha, What the hell—?" He stammered, fumbling for his glasses on the bedside table.

She flipped the light switch, ignoring the way Bruce meekly shielded his eyes, and interrupted, "Do our comms make noise?"

Bruce shoved his glasses on, blinking sleep out of his eyes, and asked eloquently, "What?"

"Do our comms make noise?"

Bruce turned to Clint, silently repeating himself. Clint stepped out from behind Natasha and explained, "I think Spider-Man heard our comms turn on, she thinks it's bullshit. Is it possible?"

Bruce stared at her stony face and crossed arms. Well, shit.

"You're asking me, the guy who sometimes turns into another, greener dude, if it's possible for a superhero that can climb walls and shoot webs to hear your comms?"

She didn't break eye contact. "Yes," she replied sternly.

Bruce shook his head in an attempt to clear it, rapidly saying, "Um, I guess? I mean, spiders can hear better than humans, so it's safe to say that *Spider-Man* probably can, too."

Natasha, ever stubborn, forced, "Elaborate."

"Our comms links are directed straight into our ears so that anyone around us can't hear them, like earbuds. But also like earbuds, if loud enough, they can be heard by people around."

"But he was, like, two hundred yards away," Clint interjected.

"And if Spider-Man has enhanced hearing along with enhanced strength and healing, he could probably hear you like he was standing right next to you."

Natasha lowered her hands to her hips, shifting her weight to one side. "Then why didn't he hear our conversations? We were talking about him right before he showed up, he must have heard us when he was coming."

Bruce thought for a moment, then answered, "This guy's been hero-ing for almost two years, he might have had these powers for even longer. He's probably learned to tune out so much noise."

And just like that, Natasha turned on her heel and stormed off. Bruce stared after her. "Where is she going?"

Clint replied, "To Tony's lab. Probably to ask him."

Then, with the *whoosh* of a door closing, he was gone, leaving Bruce wondering if they were ever

even there. "Spies," he muttered, turning over and letting his eyes close once more.

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And yet, twenty minutes later, Bruce was sitting in a meeting room with the rest of the Avengers, who had since returned from their mission.

Tony, at the head of the simple mahogany table, started, "So, why are we here?"

Natasha, from where she sat casually near the opposite end, announced, "Clint and I have been following and watching Spider-Man on and off since Monday. And now it's Thursday and we haven't been able to hold him in one place. Today, though, I'm pretty sure we figured out another one of his powers." She paused, letting her eyes sweep the room.

"Which is?" Steve sighed.

"He has enhanced hearing abilities. He heard my comm turn on."

"Is that even possible?" Sam inquired. He was almost comically perched on an extra chair in the corner, and Tony would have laughed had he not been so fucking tired. Once again, the alien tech had slipped through his fingers, and the people with it. Tony had the television tuned to the local New York news station to see if any civilians had seen anything of the sort.

Bruce piped up, "Yes. We already went through this."

"Who is 'we'?"

"Me, Natasha, and Clint. Don't even ask."

Tony grumbled, "So how is that supposed to help us get him? Why are we getting him at all—"

Bruce cut him off, simultaneously ignoring his second question. "Well, it looks like he takes after spiders in more ways than just the webs. Like them, his hearing seems to be incredibly sensitive,

so it makes sense that all his other senses would be, too.”

Tony perked up, his head lifting from where it was supported by his hands. He always enjoyed the rare times when he got to bounce ideas off of someone who could keep up with him. He continued for Bruce, “So we could use those to take him in? Confuse him with some loud noises and bright lights and bring him here?”

“Exactly!” Bruce exclaimed. “He’s too sneaky and intuitive to take in with brute force, but if we can just freak him out enough, he’ll go straight down!”

Rhodey cut in, “And how are we supposed to get him to stay in one place long enough to do that?”

“Easy,” Natasha’s cold voice resurfaced, now sitting straight up, leaning in towards the conversation. “The guy’s a bleeding heart and a half. The second he notices someone in danger he goes all in. We just have to make him think somebody’s hurt and he’ll come straight to us.”

And before anyone could debate the ethics of that statement, the television behind her cast a purple glow over the room. All heads turned to stare as they saw a blur of red and blue swing over an all-too familiar explosion.

#### Chapter End Notes

Do y'all like where this story is going so far??? Is it good????? Good???? Is she good??? Yes????? Great

Also constructive criticism is super appreciated!!! I thrive off of comments!!!! For the love of god please just comment something!!!

## Fade Away

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God," Peter said under his breath, the words strung together as if they were one. He was thanking whatever cruel god was up there than he had refilled his web fluid before fighting these guys.

Standing before him, or more accurately sprinting at him, were four men, three of which were huge, ugly, bald, and holding some incredibly threatening purple guns. The fourth man was slowly backing away from the scene, his meek body curling up on itself, clearly caught off guard. From what Peter could gather, he was the buyer for the weapons. The other dudes were goons.

He let the buyer run off. Peter had bigger fish to fry than his little rat mustache.

"Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God," Peter said as he swung a punch at the face of the man who reached him first, landing it with a sickening crack. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end and he ducked without thinking, using the stance to sweep his legs under the guy behind him, but didn't have time to smile at the little "oof" he gave off once the wind was knocked out of him. A purple light streaked overhead, and Peter could feel the heat it gave off from his position on the cement. He lifted his head and saw a smoldering hole in the brick, precisely in the spot his head had been in seconds before.

Peter stood slowly, shooting a web from each hand to hold fallen men down. He stared straight at the man who had shot at him, the smallest of them all—not that it was saying much. His eyes were wide and his mouth was hung open. Clearly, he hadn't known about the whole Spider-sense thing.

He dropped the gun and started sprinting off in the other direction, the smartest decision he'd made all night. Before he could make it to the nearest street lamp, he was struggling weakly against the webbing that stuck him to the well.

Okay. Time to see about those weapons.

Peter walked back to the car, careful about jostling it more than he needed to; glowing purple guns were usually unpredictable. He picked up one and held it close to his gave to inspect it. It was long, modeled much like a regular rifle, except instead of ammunition storage, there was a glass compartment showing a strange core, which seemed to be emitting the purple light than surrounded it. That must be what shot the weird laser. How someone turned gross purple sludge into a deadly

weapon almost intrigued Peter, but not nearly as much as where they must have gotten it.

Suddenly, an acrid stench hit his nose hard enough to make him sneeze. Whirling around to find the source, he saw that the compartment of the gun the tiny guy had dropped was shattered, and the sludge was starting to sizzle.

Peter didn't know what chemicals were in that thing, but he knew enough to tell that sizzling was a bad sign.

So, in the few seconds he had, Peter grabbed all three guys and tossed them on top of the building on his right, not even bothering to re-web them, and shot a web at a lamp down the street.

No sooner had his feet left the dirty ground than the simmering gotten exponentially louder, and bright purple filled the edges of his vision and scorched through the cloth and skin on his back.

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“You know,” Tony said from where he was crouched on the floor, “I really do think this is a bad idea.”

He was surrounded by the discarded parts of a few dismantled suits and cars, a wrench in his hand and bolts balanced on his knee. Right now, he was converting his DJ Party Suit, Which turned into an automated turn table that another suit could be programmed to play, into a control box that would let him brighten the lights and heighten the sound of whatever room’s electricity he hooked it up to. Pretty much all of the Avengers were there with him, hovering nervously. Only Bruce helped him, yet the couch across the room held Steve, Rhodey, and Clint. The others bided their time in various areas of the room; Wanda played with her magic, idly twirling the red wisps of light between his fingers and around her palm; Clint seemed to be playing pattycake with an empty suit; Bucky just stood, unreadable in the shadows. He kind of freaked Tony out, even still.

“And yet you’re still tinkering,” Natasha commented from the corner she stood in, brooding, observing.

“I don’t know, man, I kind of agree with Tony.” And Sam did look troubled; his nails were bitten down to the quick, a nervous habit of his that he tried to hide and usually failed. “This feels kind of wrong. What if we really hurt this guy?”

"You won't," Natasha insisted.

"But what if we do—?"

"You. Won't. Right Tony?"

Tony shrugged but didn't look up. He dropped the wrench and Bruce silently handed him a screwdriver. "We still don't know this guy's powers, so no guarantees."

Rhodey clasped his hands together, brows knit closer together than the sweater he wore, and nervously said, "I still don't like this."

Finally, just as Tony knew he would, Steve piped up angrily. "But you like it a whole lot more than rotting in the Raft, right?"

Silence washed over the room, heavy and thick, broken only by Bruce's bitter snort. Steve continued.

"Face it. Those are our only two options and we all know it. Ever since Spider-Man pulled that stunt a few days ago, Ross has been up Tony and I's asses. He says we get him or he does, and it'll definitely be better for everyone involved if it's us. Got it?"

This time, not even Bruce said a word. They knew what it was like in there; cold, dark, and as isolated as you can get while still being on the planet. It was a place where nightmares were born and made alike, and few returned. The ones that did weren't the same. The idea of anyone going there, even some hotshot superhero that none of them knew, was a little too much to handle.

Steve took their silence as an answer. "Good," he said, and Tony knew that it was over. That one word was too final to argue, and now the dreadful plan that Earth's Mightiest Heroes had hashed out was going into action, cemented by a binder full of signatures and a lab full of grim faces.

Some heroes they were, huh?

Y'all. I hated writing this chapter bc i so excited for next chapter!!!!!!! It's going to hurt so bad y'all I'm so psyched!!!!

# But I Know It All Will Come Back One Day

## Chapter Notes

Lol y'all are gonna h a t e me for the next few chapters I thrive off of pain

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tony felt sick to his stomach, and it wasn't just because of Bruce's 'cooking.' Here he was, someone who had vowed to protect Earth and all of its life, setting up a device to torture a person enough that they would willingly be kidnapped to get away from it.

Pepper was right. He should have hung up the suit long ago.

Him and the rest of the Avengers were crammed into a soundproof room barely the size of a broom closet, with earmuffs and protective sunglasses ready, closely watching monitors that showed footage of the main room. For the last day and a half, Tony had reworked all the wiring in the shitty storage area to become compatible with his new device, and set up a camera in each corner to observe. Tony and Bruce both had their hands on the controls, ready to move at a moment's notice. One look at Bruce told him that he wasn't quite on board with this either, but he certainly didn't want to be on board the Raft.

Natasha, though, wasn't with the rest of them. She stood in the dead center of the room, earmuffs and glasses already on. Her shoulders were squared and her feet planted. She'd been steeled long ago, and Tony sometimes feared the cold blankness behind her eyes.

She watched out the open doorway, waiting to see a familiar costume shoot by. Tense silence hung in the air so thickly that Tony had to actively keep from shaking. Ten minutes passed and no one said a word.

Then ten more. Then an hour, then two. Everyone but Tony and Natasha had long since sat down, worn down by the weight of their bodies and decisions alike. The two outliers, though, hadn't moved a muscle. There they stood, the two of them, one shaking, one still, both full to the brim of ice.

Then, Natsha turned to face one of the cameras and gave a quick thumbs up. The sudden action jolted everyone out of their thoughts, and they leapt to their feet. Whoever could leaned so close to the monitors that the glass fogged over with their hot breath.

Then, with no warning beyond a monumental breath of air, Natasha dropped her jaw and screamed. Occasionally, words like “help me” and “please!” slipped out, but for the most part all anyone could hear was an anguished wail. It hurt Tony to even listen to, and judging by the cringing of his coworkers around him, he wasn’t alone in that idea.

The most frightening part wasn’t even the noise; it was that Natasha’s face remained as stony and cold as if she were sitting in silence. The panicked shouts of hot agony and freezing fear bursting from her lips were the only indicators she was even alive.

She covered her mouth to muffle her screams and sobs and began moving backwards, keeping her eyes locked on the open doorway where light streamed in, and began moving up the concrete stairs. Tony understood why: it sounded like she was being dragged somewhere.

For a second, once she reached the second floor, Tony wasn’t sure Spider-Man had even heard. Then, a masked figure appeared in the doorway. His chest heaved, his hands clenched, and his head swiveled around wildly, searching for the source of the noise. He sprinted faster than Tony had ever seen a person move towards the stairs, and with an exaggerated nod to Bruce, he pressed his fingers down on buttons and knobs that he knew would only cause pain.

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Peter knew something was wrong the moment he stepped in the building. He senses danger from every direction, as if he were surrounded. As if...whoever had screamed was surrounded.

He bolted towards the obvious stairs, his foot on the first step and—

Pain.

All Peter knew was pain.

Pain and pain and pain and pain and even though searing agony shot through his head he needed to find the victim so he kept climbing—

And pain and pain and pain and pain and screams just like the victims were dripping from his bleeding

lips, not that he could even hear them, because he was in so much *pain*.

And then something brighter and louder happened.

*And pain and pain and pain and pain and oh good God it hurts so much when will I die when will I die I must be dying I must be dead it hurts so bad.*

Pan to the ceiling. Fade to black.

---

Tony couldn't hear the screams that reverberated through the room. None of them could.

A sound just too high for them to hear played just loud enough to hurt their ears. They thought they just confused him. They couldn't know how much he hurt.

But he kept going. He tensed all over and for a few seconds seemed to collapse, but picked himself back up and climbed the next step. Tony twisted a dial harder. The sound played louder.

Spider-Man fell to the floor, his hands clasping the sides of his head. He writhed on the dirty floor, clawing at his ears so hard the fabric around them ripped, revealing tufts of greasy brown hair.

Tony couldn't tear his eyes away from the screen, from the absolute torture he was witnessing. He was *causing*.

And then Bruce ripped his hands off the controls as if to stop the whole process, his mouth open and yelling words none of them could hear, because they were blanketed in silence even as vibrations of sound rocked their tiny concrete cellar.

Then Natasha was there, shoving Bruce out of the way and dialing all the knobs to the top.

Tony screamed against the oppressive quiet as the man's back arched up off of the floor, his body wracked with sobs as his gloved fingers cracked the concrete beneath him. It was made no better

when he fell completely limp.

Thankfully, a slightly greener Bruce Banner smashed a slightly overgrown hand into the control panel, smashing the wires and hardware and plunging them all into darkness. The monitors played on, though, and even as the lights in the room dimmed he could still see the panicked motions of a man in more pain than he could comprehend.

Rhodey was the first of them to move. He threw open the door and entered the room where Spider-Man lay, and everyone followed with an unparalleled urgency, leaving only Bruce and Natasha in the control room, fire against ice, already shouting back and forth.

Rhodey knelt down next to the boy, accompanied by Steve, Tony, and Sam, as everyone looked on nervously. Wanda was being held by Vision, evident tears shining against her pale face. Tony couldn't worry about that right now, though, because the places of the hood that covered Spider-Man's ears were soaked with blood, deepening the vibrant red of the fabric.

Sam moved to rip his mask off, and any other day Tony would have protested revealing his identity before he was ready, but the lights and sounds were only supposed to hurt a little, only supposed to inflict confusion, and now this so-unbelievably-small-as-he-lay-unmoving figure was bleeding from places no human should ever bleed.

Sam hooked his fingers under the worn, dirty, blood stained fabric and pulled.

"Holy shit."

#### Chapter End Notes

Please for the love of god just comment something

Also for the one person that read this and also understands the chapter titles: should the next one be "I dream of a city beyond all compare" or should I just skip the bridge and go to the second chorus



# I Dream of a City Beyond All Compare

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Holy shit,” Sam said.

And Tony couldn’t agree more.

Because the face that emerged from under the mask was not the happy, healthy, twenty-something year old face that he had expected. The skin was smooth over gaunt cheeks, long lashes sealed sunken eyes into their dark circles, and bruises highlighted the too-prominent cheekbones in deep blue and sickly yellow. By far the worst part, though, was the blood steadily trickling from his ears and nose.

This was the face of a child. And certainly not a healthy one.

No one made a sound. Even Wanda’s gentle sniffles had stopped. Tony was sure that this revelation had transformed them all into ice sculptures, cold and still and one nudge away from shattering. Every vein in his body was frozen, every muscle stopped and every neuron blocked. The only thought running through his head was that he just killed a child.

He just killed a child.

*I just killed a child.*

”I just killed a child.”

Tony’s distraught murmur brought them all out of their stupor, and then everyone was moving unbelievably quickly, so focused on making sure that they *hadn’t* killed him that they didn’t have time to argue over whose fault it was that this no-older-than-college aged boy had been in indescribable pain and may never be alright again. He heard Clint calling in the med-team as if he were underwater. Vision’s vital readings were miles away, and Tony’s hand floated up as if it weren’t his own, holding his significantly blurrier than normal cell phone. He saw his fingers tap the screen, heard his voice tell Helen Cho to be ready when he showed up, as if he weren’t in control. As if someone else was driving his body and he was just in the passenger’s seat.

Because he was, wasn't he? He was Ross's little pet, made to do tricks and catch spiders whenever his master commanded. He wasn't free. Tony hadn't been free a day in his life. He was trapped by his father, then his company, then his own creation, and now Thaddeus Ross, one of the worst villains he'd ever faced. He'd never be free. He'd never be in control.

Tony heard a familiar voice calling his name. "Get back in the game," it said. "You don't get to check out on us now." And familiar hands gripped his arms like a lifeline, and he found he was gripping them back, trying to find anything to tether him to the real world.

"Tony. Look at me. Now."

Tony looked up and saw as Rhodey's face floated into view, concerned eyes and a hard-set jaw contradicting one another. And—and it was Rhodey who had said those things. It was Rhodey whose hands he was gripping with a surely painful amount of force, and if Rhodey was here it must be the real world, so he must still be in control, right? Right?

Right.

So Tony loosened his death grip on Rhodey's arm and finally took a breath, relieving the burning in his lungs that he hadn't even realized was there. He nodded, not trusting his own voice, and turned back to the tiny, limp figure with fingers strong enough to break concrete.

He was Tony Stark. No one owned him. He owned himself.

(At least, that's what he told himself so he could make it through the next fifteen minutes.)

Tony straightened his back and strode back to the boy. Bruce had knelt down next to him, having forgotten Natasha, and was doing his best to perform some kind of examination. To everyone in the room, though, it was evident that he was much more focused on fighting down the green that had crept its way up to his chin.

The last thing any of them needed now was a Hulk-out, so Tony sent Bruce to go back to the control room and clean up. Bruce nodded solemnly and stood, shutting the door behind him, grateful for an excuse to try and calm down.

Tony took his place next to the boy and wondered what color his eyes were. He'd seen everything

else about him, starvation and torture clearly written on his face, but never yet his eyes. Would they be clear, calculating, and intelligent? Or would they be wide, doe-like and feminine? Could they be blue or green, black or brown, empty or still containing one tiny spark of hope that could rekindle the surely lost fire?

Tony didn't know, but since there was nothing he could do to help him now, it was all he cared to think about.

Eventually, after what felt like years of shouting matches and tense silence, all surrounding the topic of "did we just kill a teenager," the medical jet arrived, and with an agonizing swirl of white coats and medical talk, they all piled in and started back home.

Tony wished it were like the movies, where he could say it was silent the whole time. Even though no Avengers spoke—aside from Wanda and Vision's concerned whispers—words like "extreme sensory damage" and "near starvation" were impossible to block out.

---

Tony sat in the overly-modern, overly-expensive waiting room to the medbay. The rest of the Avengers were there, too, shifting uncomfortable on the hard chairs and muttering back and forth in small groups. Tony sat alone. So did Clint. Natasha was nowhere to be found.

It was only an hour later when Helen came out of an exam room, and although she spoke to everyone, her soft eyes settled on Tony's.

"He'll live." So much air was let out that Tony was surprised none of their lungs had ruptured. His first question was answered, and relief flooded him. But he couldn't let himself get giddy now; he had another question. "Both of his eardrums were severely ruptured, and his pupils seem to be stuck in a constricted state. There's no telling whether or not he can hear or see, or if he can't, whether he will be able to again. We also found...something weird."

Tony cocked an eyebrow; in his line of work, that never meant anything good. "Weird?" He repeated skeptically.

Helen shook out her hands and continued, "His entire back was covered in burn scars. They looked months old, but the pattern is nothing we've ever seen before. We don't know how he got him or when. We just know they're there, but healed. He also had severe starvation, dehydration, and was

bordering on hypothermia, but he's on a few drips for that."

Steve, from where he was sketching idly in a chair that was comically small for him, piped up, "And how old is he?" And that was it. What every soul had been waiting to know. Everyone sat up just a little straighter in their chairs, tuned in and listening like hounds stalking their prey.

Helen shifted nervously. "We, um...don't know. We can predict from his muscle growth and general body shape that he is, at the oldest, in his early twenties. The starvation makes it hard to tell, though, and we could be dead wrong. We'll just have to wait until he tells us."

"Can we see him?" The words were out of Tony's mouth before he could even stop them. He felt strangely protective over Spider-Man, despite not even knowing his name. Maybe because he was the one responsible for all of this.

Helen gave a sad smile, practiced and even, and replied, "I'm sorry, but he probably won't even wake up for another few days. For now, he's under intensive care for his injuries and extra people would be a bad idea."

Tony nodded solemnly. He hadn't really expected any other answer.

Nobody asked her another question. What would they ask? So she left, her long coat trailing behind her as she re-entered the room she'd come from.

And with that, Tony couldn't stand the stark white walls and tense heroes around him for another second. He stood sharply, ignoring the questions from the people all around and left, striding towards his lab.

Tony would find out who this kid was if it killed him, and at this rate, it very well might.

#### Chapter End Notes

Not super proud of this one, more of a transition so I can get to what I'm really psyched for. Anyways, I'm always a slut for attention, so if you liked the story or see something I could improve, please comment !!

## **And I Hear a Voice Whisper, ‘I’ll Meet You Right There’**

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony stormed blindly through the halls of the compound, muscle memory taking over as nothing but red, red, red filled his skull. It still tinged the edges of his vision as he threw open the door to Natasha’s bedroom, a place where he’d rarely been and never been alone. She didn’t like people in her stuff, that he knew.

The room was silent and blanketed in darkness. It was then that, through his rage, Tony realized the awful day had bled into an eerie night without him even realizing.

“Do you need something?” Natasha’s cold voice cut him abruptly out of his thoughts. He turned to the left and saw, as his eyes adjusted to the light, the silhouette of Natasha laying spread-eagled on her small bed. He heard the gentle clinking of chains but couldn’t make out what she was doing.

FRIDAY turned the lights on without being asked. Tony’s eyes widened involuntarily at what he saw; Natasha Romanoff, in a thin white nightgown, laying on her back and on top of the quilt, her hair fanned out behind her on a single flat pillow. That wasn’t the disturbing part, though; both of her hands were cuffed to the bedposts, leaving her open and vulnerable in a way her never seen her before. Even so, her eyes remained cold, her demeanor hard as stone. He wondered how she could look so menacing yet so exposed at the same time.

She sighed and began unshackling herself with a small key fisted in her right hand.

When Tony regained his voice, he joked over the sound of metal on metal, “Wow, Natasha. Never pegged you for that kind of girl.”

For a moment he thought she had ignored him. He watched her silently slip her wrists out of the cuffs and sit up, swinging her legs over the side of the bed and rubbing the red rings on her arms. She kept her eyes down, letting her flaming hair shield her face, and muttered, “Yeah, well, there are some habits that spies just can’t break.”

Tony saw, just for a second, the woman behind the iron gate she seemed locked in, and wanted to reach out, ask why she was how she was, did what she did. He wanted to open the unlocked door, if only for a moment, and see Natasha Romanoff. Not Black Widow. Natasha Romanoff.

Then, as if it were nothing more than a dream, the soft film over her eyes hardened once again into brick, and Tony knew he'd get nowhere.

The brief pity he had felt for her was gone. The rage had returned, hot as coals.

"Why the hell did you do that?" He asked, voice simmering.

She didn't answer, just kept rubbing her wrists, her red, red wrists.

He continued. "You saw him suffering. You *saw* him in pain. And you made it worse? Why?" He hated to admit that his voice cracked on the last syllable, just a bit.

A lot.

"It had to be done."

"*Why?*"

"Because he's a vigilante, Stark! Those are always bad news!" She snapped, finally meeting his eyes. They flared for barely a second, fire so scalding yet so brief that Tony might have imagined it.

Then, she cooled. She took a deep breath and continued, "I've never seen a good vigilante, alright? They might start that way but they never stay good."

Tony opened his mouth to protest, but she's pressed on. "You've seen him on the news. He's getting sloppier. Reckless, even. He's going after guys way out of his league without a care in the world. If he doesn't go insane and kill someone soon, he'll end up dying anyways. He's a danger to Queens and he's a danger to himself."

"You don't know that!" Tony shouted.

Natasha matched his volume and intensity, finally abandoning the raw skin around her wrists in

favor of standing sharply and marching so close to Tony that he could count every freckle on her face. "Yes, I do! I do know that! The problem is that *no one else does!*"

"We all used to be vigilantes!"

"*Used* to be, Stark! We're not—" Natasha trailed off, took a breath. Stepped back. She straightened her back, blinked slowly, and continued quietly. "We're not anymore. When we were, I was killing people left and right, Steve was committing treason every other day, Bruce was going apeshit in India, and you were using your suit as a party trick. Vigilantes are irresponsible. *People* are irresponsible. We can't just leave him alone to do whatever he wants."

Tony breathed hard for a couple of seconds, clenching and unclenching his fists, because this was not as black-and-white as Iron Man versus Giant Space Monster Number Four, or even Earth versus Aliens. This was grey. Neither of them were right. Neither of them were wrong.

*Some of us are more wrong than others.*

Tony said, "And now we don't know when he'll wake up. We don't know what condition he'll be in. So whatever point you just made, I don't want to hear it. If he's blind, Natasha, if he's dead or comatose or traumatized? Then it's your fault."

"Yeah," She agreed, and Tony was taken aback. "Yeah, it will be. But if I hadn't done what I did, he might have become one of the strongest villains we've ever faced. You saw what he could do alone, imagine what he could do with a few guys on his side. He's smart, we both know that, so we can't leave him alone."

"But he might stay good! Name one bad thing you've seen him do."

"Nothing yet, Stark. But no villain starts out pure evil. If we don't train him, or at least let him know we're powerful, he could kill himself. He could kill *us*." Her eyes were pleading, but Tony knew her well enough to understand they weren't. She was a master spy, a master manipulator. She was a mirror, and she was just reflecting what Tony wanted, no, *needed*, to see.

But he wouldn't give in.

"Natasha," he started evenly, "I've forgiven you for a lot. Like, a lot. But this? I can't." Her face

didn't change but Tony saw the way her hand twitch. Under all the layers of stone and steel, that was her equivalent of a gasp. "No matter how he turns out, knowing that you're willing to torture someone to keep them from becoming a villain --even though he's shown no sign of that--I'm not forgetting that. I don't think I can."

And just when she was about to argue, no doubt with another cutting rebuttal, FRIDAY's smooth voice joined in and announced, "Boss, it appears that Spider-Man has left the compound."

#### Chapter End Notes

Yall know what I want, babes. Comments coming in three, two, one...

## You Don't Know What It's Like

Peter felt warm. So, so warm.

He relished in the feeling, one once so familiar yet now unbelievably foreign, letting his eyes stay closed and melting within the soft blankets surrounding him. Fatigue pulled at him, a comfortable weight on his chests, and he let it push him down into the guise of sleep once again.

Wait.

Why was he somewhere soft?

Peter shot up vertically, keeping his eyes scrunches shut. Wind buffeted his face and—

He didn't have his mask. Peter slowly lifted a hand to his cheek, and moaned softly as he felt skin rather than fabric.

Why couldn't he hear the moan?

Whatever, he had much more serious problems. He was somewhere foreign, meaning he was in someone else's care. His mask was gone, so that someone knew his face. Maybe not his name, but his face. Peter clenched his hands into fists, trying to fight the rising panic within him.

He just had to take in his surroundings and get the hell out of...wherever he was.

He gingerly opened his eyes.

And saw nothing.

Black.

Better than red. But still black.

Okay, so it was pitch dark. That must have been it. So he opened his mouth to call out to anyone nearby—

Nothing came out.

Well, no, something did. Peter felt his mouth form words and his vocal cords vibrate, but the sound didn't ever reach his ears. He couldn't hear.

He couldn't hear. He couldn't see. Somebody knew who he was.

Shakily, having abandoned his fight against panic in favor of going into full fight-or-flight mode, Peter stood, nearly buckling to the ground again, because fuck, I hurt. He wondered how he didn't notice that before.

He stumbles over what must have been some sort of cord sprung out from the black and simultaneously felt a sharp ripping in his hand, then the warm flow of blood, but didn't dwell on it.

His hands found something cold and smooth, but it kept going wherever he ran his palms over it, so it must have been the wall. He started moving left, waiting for the metal to give way to either glass he could break or a knob he could turn.

Stumbling blindly, his fingers passed over something smooth—something glass. A window. He clumsily punched the panes and felt it give way as if it were tissue paper.

Wasting no time, Peter fumbled out of the window, hardly feeling the way the jagged glass pieces gashed his skin. His fingers stuck to the wall outside and within seconds he was out, wind screaming silently past his ears and throwing his hair in every direction.

Okay. His feet dangled rather than hitting the ground and the air was far too wild to be near the ground, so he must have been pretty far up. He was Spider-Man. He's climbed plenty of buildings. He could handle this.

Of course, he'd never done it without his eyes. It was weird, really; he knew that his eyes were open, he could feel it, yet it were as dark as night still. He couldn't even hear ringing in his ears, no rushing blood. Just silence.

He peeled his right hand off of the wall, placing it a few inches below the other one. Then again with his left. Then his right foot, then his left.

He repeated this process for about twenty seconds, and holy shit how far up was he?

Then, with no warning from his constantly-screaming senses, his eyes, or his ears, he felt a strong hand grabbing his wrist.

Peter screamed (probably—how could he know?) as he was hoisted up roughly. He squirmed against the hand as it pulled him up, then back through the window where he came, and he had been gone! He'd escaped!

Peter, thrashing in the hold of whoever had grabbed him, feeling his eyes widen and his mouth yell, felt himself beginning to fade, but he couldn't give in. He kicked backwards and felt whoever it was fly off of him and hit a wall.

But the adrenaline of losing two senses was wearing off, and more hands were grabbing him, and his struggles were fading fast, and soon he felt himself floating away, losing the sensations of the hands and the smell of sweat and the bitter copper taste on his tongue.

The black, though, the silence? That didn't change, and as he drifted off into sweet unconsciousness, Peter wondered if it ever would.

---

Peter's eyes cracked open, and he felt himself back in that warm, soft bed. His fatigue was still there, strong as ever, and it took everything Peter had not to let sleep claim him. He didn't fall for it this time, though. Because now he could sort of see something.

The world was one giant, gray slate.

Peter swiveled his head around to see if anything changed, but only found slightly different shades of gray blending into one another. It was like staring straight into a sky before a storm.

Peter cracked a smile, just barely. He could see gray. He opened and closed his eyes a few times, marveling in the change from black to gray to black to gray and back all over again.

Okay, so maybe his hearing had started returning.

Peter opened his mouth, letting a grim note fall from his lips. He felt the vibrations in his throat, his nose, but heard nothing. He just sensed a weak buzzing.

Well, maybe he just needed to be louder. Maybe he could hear loud noises. Peter steadily rose his voice, unable to gage his volume beyond how roughly his throat moved underneath his gentle fingertips, which were carefully pressed up beneath his chin.

And yet, the whole time he heard nothing, not even a dull heartbeat as he would in a silent room.

Seconds later, a slightly darker gray drifted into view. It touched him, and the thing that wrapped around his arm felt an awful lot like a hand. Peter scuttled away, up the wall and onto the ceiling. At least he thought it was the ceiling, because he'd crossed two corners.

But his arms were so heavy, like lead, and soon he fell limp. He felt the wind get knocked out of him as he fell to the floor, spread-eagled, wide-eyes and gasping for air.

The same dark gray drifted over him, and cold fingers drifted over his forehead. Peter wanted to fight them off, but they were so gentle, so Peter scrabbled for only a second before his hands fell to his sides once more, like magnets attracted to the floor.

The fingers started to trace patterns on Peter's arm, and it took a few seconds of sifting through the thick jelly of his brain for him to realize that they were letters. The fingers were—they were spelling out words! His captor must have known he was blind and deaf. The captor must have been the one to make him so.

M Y N A M E I S B R U C E, it said.

Y O U A R E S A F E E V E N T H O U G H Y O U D O N T T H I N K Y O U A R E

What could that mean? He was deaf and blind, he certainly wasn't safe! But...wasn't that what the man—Bruce—had said that he'd think? But what if he was using reverse psychology? So how could Peter *know*?

The hand was still tracing, so Peter focused all of his attention into deciphering it.

P L E A S E D O N T T R Y T O R U N A G A I N Y O U G O T H U R T B A D L Y

Did he? Peter was suddenly aware of singing pain in harsh lines across his limbs.

Y O U N E E D T O S L E E P B U T Y O U N E E D T O E A T F I R S T D O Y O U T R U S T M E

Peter wasn't sure if he could, but the idea of having real food overtook any fear of this Bruce. Not trusting his own voice, since he couldn't hear it, Peter nodded fiercely. Soft, calloused hands guided him back to the soft, warm place that must have been his bed.

Seconds later, something cold and round was pressed into his lips: a spoon. Too afraid and hungry to be embarrassed, he let the odd broth be fed to him by this overly-caring man who still violently hurt him.

A few bites in, though, Peter felt a sickly pressure in his chops and held a hand up to block the spoon that was on its way to his mouth. Its contents splashed onto his lap, burning him, but Peter wasn't much concerned with that.

Peter's stomach heaved, and he leaned over the side of the bed and violently vomitted up all he'd eaten. He fell asleep still slung over the edge of the mattress with the acid taste of bile and soup mingling horribly in his mouth.

## Not to Know Who You Are

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony was waiting for Pepper when she got home.

He sat on the bed of their room, more rumpled than the duvet beneath him, the mug of cold coffee on the nightstand doing nothing to relieve the heavy bags under his bloodshot eyes.

The door flew open and the clicking of heels filled the room. Pepper strutted in, so much more put-together than Tony had ever felt.

”Tony, you would not *believe* the things I saw in France...”

She stopped in her tracks as her eyes landed on Tony, taking in his swallowed skin and frown set so hard it may have been carved.

”What happened?” She asked, concern lacing her lilting voice.

Tony mumbled something she couldn’t hear, yet he refused to meet her eyes. Instead, he cast them onto his hands, where the cuticles bled from constant nervous picking.

She moved to sit down next to him, her crisp clothes and crossed legs a sharp contrast from Tony’s stained shirt and criss-crossed sitting.

”Tony, honey, just tell me what went wrong,” She soothed, rubbing small circles on his back.

He took a shuddering breath, and other than speaking, did not acknowledge Pepper. “We caught Spider-Man.”

Pepper smiled, that beautiful smile that warmed Tony’s heart, though now it boiled his blood, because he knew she didn’t take him seriously. “Tony, that’s great!” She laughed. “You finally did it, why is that bad?”

Finally he met her eyes, and the fear in them reflected back in her own, clearly startling her. For a moment, he was silent, his lips pressed in a hard line. Then, he said, "He's a kid, Pep."

Her smile faltered. "What?"

"A kid. A child. He's in his early twenties at most, and we almost killed him." His breathing was coming in fast now, and he was clenching and un-clenching his hands like he wasn't even aware of it.

Pepper, knowing all of Tony's little tics, said quickly, "Hey, hey. *Hey*. I need you to slow down and tell me what happened. Can you do that?"

Tony didn't reply, but he started to still ever so slightly.

"Tony. *Can you do that?*" She repeated, insisted.

Tony took a moment, gulped, and tried to push down the buzzing that was filling up his bones. Then, slowly, he nodded.

"We..." he started. "We figures out that he has super sensitive vision and hearing, so..." A deep breath. "So we thought we'd use it against him."

He trailed off, his gaze set back on his palms. "And?" Pepper prompted, leaning in towards Tony.

Tony continued, "And so we baited him in, then turned on lights and sounds bright and loud enough to hurt him. *Seriously* hurt him."

A small gasp sounded from Pepper before she composed herself again.

"And when he woke up and opened his eyes it wasn't like he couldn't see any of us, and when Bruce started talking he couldn't hear him, but he looked so *scared*. And then he tried to escape and almost passed out on the side of the building, and he only woke up one other time and he's

been out ever since and i don't know when he's gonna wake up or if he'll ever be able to see or hear again. We didn't think it would hurt him so much, just that it would confuse him, but he was so much more sensitive then we thought, it wasn't supposed to *hurt him*. Pepper, *I didn't mean to hurt him.*"

And Tony was staring at her with such pleading panic in his eyes, like a child begging his mother not to ground him, and Pepper had no idea who was at fault or what Spider-Man's true age was but right now she didn't much care because Tony was in so much pain and so far within the depths of his own guilt that he was almost lost in it.

Scratch that—he was *totally* lost in it.

Pepper, for lack of another idea, simply wrapped her arms around her fiancé, who let himself be held in a way he never would have out in public, or even with the other Avengers.

She let her head fall upon his own, which rested limply on her shoulder. She hummed softly and did her best to calm Tony, who was so much stronger and so much softer than any of them knew.

Finally, while she slowly laid the both of them back on the bed, his arms clinging around her torso, she wondered how she scored someone who was such an extreme mix of both.

#### Chapter End Notes

I have to submit a portfolio for the application for this creative writing class I'm taking but I only write fanfiction so What Do

# To Have Lived In the Shadows

## Chapter Notes

This chapter. This fucking chapter. This thing was a beast. I cannot begin to tell you how much time I spent lying facedown on the ground trying to come up with something. This is like those choose your own adventure stories where you choose one of two paths that you think won't matter but one leads you to an ice cream parlor and the other leads to actual hell. Holy God y'all. Please appreciate this one

The first thing Peter noticed was the ringing.

Harsh, loud, and *incredibly fucking annoying* ringing filled his ears, and he was fairly sure it had been what had woken him up. It was hard to ignore his pounding headache, too, but that was a bit more regular.

Cringing, he tried to sit up, and fell straight back onto the bed, nausea overpowering any rational thought as his blankets billowed up around him and brushed against his skin.

Peter kept his eyes squeezed shut and tried to will away the ringing. He didn't want to open them; he didn't want to see the world of flat gray.

Fuck, it was hard to think around the ringing.

But maybe he could see again?

No, that was too could to be true. Even if he *had* gone from black to gray each time he woke up, it was unlikely that he would fare much better this time. It felt like he'd barely slept at all, anyways.

But if it could give him any inkling as to where he was and how to get out, he needed it to happen. Besides, his limbs weren't as weighed down this time, so maybe the rest of him had healed some, too.

Hesitantly, Peter peeled his eyes open.

Color.

Explosive blurs of white and beige and blue and black smeared across his vision. He wasn't blind. He wasn't blind! He could make out something long and thin protruding from his arm, and what he assumed to be a white blanket draped over his legs. Across from him, a blob of blue that was probably a painting.

Peter turned his head to his right, and saw green. Beautiful, rich, forest green that varied ever so slightly in shade to shade. Blue. Green. White. Black. Yellow.

Peter let out a laugh, a quiet, hysterical laugh and—

"I can...hear?"

And he could. Just under the oppressive ringing, he heard a whisper of a sentence coming from his own throat. It was like the days before the bite, when he had an ear infection and everything sounded far away and under water. Nevertheless, things sounded.

He could almost see. He could almost hear. He was warm and full and in a soft bed.

Peter smiled. For the first time in two entire years, Peter smiled for himself. Because he had something now. He had something.

As Peter's scratchy laugh continued, fueled by hysterical giddiness, a block of white swing open and a beige and purple shape drifted in.

Peter instinctively scooted backwards until he hit the headboard. His eyes widened and it felt odd to have dry air hit his without his mask as a buffer.

The shape, though, said through a hundred layers of thick jelly, "Hey, it's Bruce. Remember me? I'm not going to hurt you." Peter didn't believe it for a second. He pressed back further, feeling the metal bars dig into his skin. The voice sounded much too caring to be a kidnapper, but Peter still couldn't be sure. Insane people kidnapped all the time and thought that it was all hunky-dory.

"Can you see me?" he asked. Peter wasn't sure if he should let the man know that he could, but nodded before he could stop himself.

"Seriously?" Peter nodded again, unable to decide whether it was surprise or anger in Bruce's hushed tone. "Great! Yeah, okay, that's great. I take it you can hear?" Another hesitant nod. Peter pulled his legs up to his chest, trying to shy away from this man and the sledgehammers on his skull.

Another voice interrupted then, from outside the room, demanding to know what was happening. Bruce silenced him, though, saying, "Tony, one on one is better. I can help him if he freaks out, just give me a second."

The voice grumbled its reluctant agreement and heavy footsteps soon fell out of hearing distance.

"Sorry about that," Bruce laughed. "Tony can be kind of pushy."

So this kidnapping was a two-man operation? Great. It would be a while before he figured out how to escape.

A shifting of weight near Peter's feet told him that Bruce had sat down on his bed. "So, I'm sure you have a lot of questions."

Peter didn't respond.

"Would you...like to know anything?"

Slowly, Peter opened his mouth, trying to catch one of the questions flying around his head and hold onto it. Finally, his voice raw and ragged from disuse, he asked. "What...what did you do to me?"

Had he been able to see clear pictures, he would have noticed Bruce's obvious flinch. Unfortunately, he just saw a slight shift in where purple met white.

Bruce seemed extremely uncomfortable, his voice tight and troubled as he explained. "Well, I, uh...we had observed your powers and super-senses and decided that sensory overload was the best way to take you in without permanent damage." Peter scoffed bitterly. "But we didn't know how much it would do!" Bruce added on quickly. "We didn't know how sensitive your senses really were."

"Great. And now you know my identity." An awkward pause, full of tension and bitterness. "Okay, well, where am I?" Peter doubted he'd get an answer from his kidnapper but hoped that maybe he was dumb enough to give up their location.

"I think that, that now isn't the best time to discuss that," Bruce replied awkwardly. Of course. What did Peter expect.

"Obviously."

"Obviously?"

"Just...nothing. Tell me the date, at least?"

"Oh, sure," Bruce replied cheerily. He seemed to pull something out of his pocket, then said, "It's the first of February."

Okay, so judging by how long it had been since the Christmas decorations were all taken down at Rockefeller Center...

"I've been here for three weeks?!" Peter felt his heart begin to speed up. He'd had one job, to be Spider-Man, to always protect his city, and he'd left the people alone for *three weeks*?

Bruce, noticing his rising panic, soothed, "Hey, it's alright. You spent most of it asleep, anyways. And, if it's any comfort, we don't know your name or anything, just your face. When you tell us the rest is up to you."

That did a little bit to help. There were millions of people in New York City. There were thousands of pasty fifteen year old boys. How would they find him after he escaped? Speaking of which...

"Who are you working with? You obviously didn't take me alone," Peter pressed.

Bruce seemed to stand, and Peter had to focus on not throwing up as the mattress he rested on shifted beneath him. He said, regaining a bit of his former professionalism, "I think that's something I should show you. Think you can stand?"

## **And Traveled This Far**

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Do you need any help standing?” The purple smudge called Bruce asked in That careful doctor’s voice. How lovely and caring of him.

Peter shook his head, regretting the action immediately as he held down bile. Slowly, hesitantly, he swung his legs over the side of the bed, careful to not get wrapped up in the probably-worth-more-than-his-life sheets. If he used even a fraction of his real strength, they’d likely tear like paper under his fingertips.

He silently counted to himself, saying he’d get up on three. He breathed in and out through his nose, trying to calm the sea of sickness pushing nauseous waves through him.

*One*

Breathe in. Stand up.

*Two*

Breathe out. *Stand up*

*Three*

With a surprised groan, Peter pressed his hands against the mattress and used it to stand on shaking legs and aching knees. Almost immediately he had to clutch at the wall as the room spun and his head pounded harder. Briefly, through even louder ringing, Peter heard Bruce ask if he was alright. Keeping his eyes squeezed shut and doing his best to resist the vortex that so desperately tried to suck him into the black, and tentatively took a step forwards. His entire body screamed in protest and he stumbled over something on the floor that blended into the white, but he hadn’t passed out or thrown up yet. He took a few more baby steps towards what he assumed was the door, but was stopped by a tugging in the back of his hand.

Bruce immediately rushed over and wrapped Peter’s hand around something cold and thin, like a

rod on wheels. It moved when he did, so it was probably some sort of IV or drip. Great. They were probably drugging him with every step he took.

Pushing the useless thought out of his mind for now, he muttered a Thanks and tried to step forwards again. His forehead hit a wall.

Peter sighed against the cold paint underneath his skin.

For a few second, All was silent. Well, except for the ringing in Peter's ears that surged with every heartbeat.

Then, Peter held out an arm, silently asking for a hand to lead him, because at this rate he'd fall out of a window or run directly into a knife.

Thankfully, Bruce got the message and within seconds, Peter felt cold fingers wrap around his forearm, as if he were some kind of nineteenth century noblewoman being escorted to a ball.

Even so, Peter let himself be lead through hallway after hallway, biting down on his cheek to keep the rhythm of Right, left, right, left going. On one occasion he stopped in the middle of the hallway, praying to whatever sadistic God was out there that he wouldn't vomit blood on the tile beneath his bare feet. Bruce asked if he was okay, just as he had fifteen times before, and Peter nodded stiffly, just as he had fifteen times before. Then, he leaned into Brice until he was nearly being dragged and continued his slow, painful shuffle. Seemed like a nice little routine they were developing.

Finally, just when Peter could feel every muscle cell screaming in protest and his stomach threatening to expel the acid and water it held and he was three seconds away from just collapsing to the floor and giving up, a door whooshed open and the endless sea of white opened up to a bunch of blobs of black, red, blue, and a single purple. Peter couldn't tell which were people and which were paintings. He knew that at least one of the colorful smudges was the ill-tempered Tony he'd heard about.

No one spoke for a few seconds, and Peter wanted so desperately for someone to offer him a chair because his knees had gone numb and his entire body was quaking and *oh yeah* he couldn't really hear or see, but it seemed like everyone was frozen in time.

Then, still blanketed in silence and ringing, with no warning beyond a minute tingling, Peter's legs

gave out beneath him.

He crumpled to the floor, feeling the needle from his IV bag rip out of his hand, but hardly registered it or the way Bruce sank down with him. Rather, he was focusing on just how many of the blobs had shot up while he collapsed. *How many of these guys are there?*

"Sorry, sorry," Peter whispered, feeling his cheeks burn at immediately embarrassing himself in front of his kidnappers.

"You have nothing to be sorry for," Bruce replied, his soft tone reminding him all too much of May, but ignored the silent urge to stay down. Rather, he clasped Bruce's (probably) shoulder and used it to hoist himself into a standing position, heavily leaning on the wall next to him and trying to keep his quivering and painful whines to a minimum.

Bruce tried to urge him to take it slow, accept his arm, but Peter snarled, "I'm fine," with as much wrath as he could muster in his current state. Bruce silenced his protests.

Slowly, Peter forced his eyes back open and turned to the blobs before him. He took a shuddering breath, and asked, "What do you guys want from me?" Sounding much more confident than he felt.

The deepest blue blob spoke up first. "Your identity, son," it said simply, harshly.

Peter laughed, a bitter sound with no humor to it. "Yeah, not gonna happen. And I know you didn't assemble a team of this many...smudges of color just to get my name. So who are you working for? Who's the boss around here?"

Two voices spoke, "Me," at once, and even without his sight, Peter knew the tension in the room had increased tenfold. Clearly, this was not an uncommon argument among the group.

Then Bruce, from where he hovered at Peter side, warned, "Tony. Steve. Not the time. Got it?"

The voices mumbled their agreement, but Peter was hardly listening. He recognized those names. He recognized those voices.

*Steve...Tony...Bruce...*

Peter barked out a sudden laugh, startling every color in the expanse of white and gray. He leaned his head onto the freezing wall, batting Bruce away as his bitter chuckles continued quietly. Because this couldn't be real. His life couldn't have gotten *this off the rails* so quickly. Everyone was staring either at him or each other, clearly unsure what to do in such an odd situation, and Peter couldn't say he blamed them.

"I'm sorry," he said, waving an apologetic hand in the group's direction. "I just—" another humorless laugh—"I don't know what I did to get the whole of the Avengers after me."

Everyone stiffened further, if it were possible, and Peter felt the same thickness in the air as when a criminal knew he'd been caught. His giggles died down within seconds, though, and he was left with an odd half-smile on his face and cold despair in his heart. Because now he was really fucked. Now he didn't even have his identity, so why shouldn't he just chuck himself out of the first window he saw? Why shouldn't he plunge headfirst over the railing he thought he saw in the hallway?

Finally, a smooth voice dressed as a gray blot asked, "How are your...senses?"

"What's your name?" Peter asked skeptically.

"Sam."

"*Superhero* name, man. I don't have internet access."

"Oh, uh—the Falcon?"

Peter hummed his approval. "Well, Falcon, I can hardly hear you over this incredibly painful ringing even though last month I'd be able to hear your heartbeat from a mile away and all I see of you is some gray next to the blue guy who yelled at me. Could be better, you know?" He smiled his sweetest smile and took satisfaction in the way the gray squirmed.

The black smudge in the corner that he hadn't noticed before spoke in a cold, cutting, feminine voice, "Look, we don't have time for all these games. What's your name?"

"No." Peter's reply was simple.

"Let me rephrase that:" the voice insisted, "either you give me your name and I give it to the federal government for you, or the Secretary of State can come down here and personally drag it out of you. Got it?"

"Natasha!" Bruce exclaimed, evidently horrified at the prospect, but Peter held up a hand to silence him.

"No," Peter said coolly, focusing his eyes on where he hoped hers were, slightly above the spot of black. Two years ago, hell, one year ago he'd have been just as horrified as Bruce, if not more. Now, though? The idea of torture just felt like more of the same, and honestly, if it killed him, then what was the downside? Spider-Man would be off the table from this point on, so what else was stopping him? What other reasons did he have to endure for so much longer?

He continued, "You won't. You won't, because I'm strong enough to rip each of you limb from limb, even like this. So instead, I think you're going to let me out that window, watch while I leave, then when you find my bleeding fucking corpse in an alley, agree to never speak of it again, alright?"

"Hey, kid—" the previously arrogant Tony interrupted, sudden desperation breaking his voice. "We—we aren't letting you get hurt, alright. Spider-ing is on hold until you get better. The teens of Queens will get by just fine."

Wow. Wow. Did these people really think so little of him? Did they think he risked his life daily as a hobby? Did they not understand how many lives he had saved that they had let slip through their fingers like grains of sand too small to measure up with aliens and robots?

A long-smoldering fire was just bellowed. It was about to burn at full force.

A long moment passed. Then, Peter started, "I don't know what you think I do with my time, Stark, but it's certainly better than Helen Keller-ing a guy who was just trying to help. I get kittens down from trees, yeah, but guess who inspected weapons dealers who were killing citizens one by one while you were off in space? Who kept countless people from getting a bullet through their skulls because Earth's Mightiest Heroes—" the name tasted bitter on his tongue and he reveled in the way half the blobs flinched "—can't be bothered? Who doesn't get a lick of credit for their work because it's not saving the world even though he has to break his own bones because in the time

it's taken to get from the crime scene to get back home, it's already healed wrong?" Peter let his eyes sweep the room, feeling the rush of fiery adrenaline start to give way to exhaustion and startling dizziness.

"None of you. Me. I'm the one worried about the little guy, so how about we leave each other to our own jobs, and all go to sleep at night like we've never done anything wrong."

And with that, Peter promptly turned on his heel, took two painful steps towards the door, felt darkness creep into the corner of his eyes, and felt the cold linoleum floor coming up to hit his cheek.

Then, Peter felt nothing at all.

#### Chapter End Notes

Hey y'all, I feel like this scene should have just been in the previous chapter so I'm probably going to merge them together soon so if it goes back to 11 don't worry about it lol also FOR FUCKS SAKE PLEASE COMMENT

## I've Seen Flashes Of Fire

### Chapter Notes

Not to scare anyone but pretty soon y'all are gonna wish we'd stayed in such happy times as these chapters ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next time Peter awoke, he was back in the same soft bed. The ringing still persisted, and he angrily massaged his ears, keeping his eyes scrunched shut.

Not even a second later, familiar hands gently pried them away. “Hey, don’t do that. It’ll only make it worse.”

Great. Bruce was here.

Deciding to at least try and be polite to the guy that could turn into the Hulk, Peter opened his eyes. He sighed at what he saw.

”Great. You’re all here.”

The blurs of color against the white backdrop were crowded together in the room, and it was clear that some of them were downright on top of one another.

That familiar blue blob spoke first. At least Steve had the decency to sound apologetic, even if it did seem sincere. “We are. And we need to ask a few questions.”

Peter scoffed, having to stop for a moment when a painful coughing took over. Once he was calm, he asked, “Why?”

”Why?”

”Yes. Why do you need to know who I am so much? It never bothered you before.”

Both the familiar blue and the familiar red turned towards each other for just a moment, and though he couldn't see their faces, he imagined that they were unsure how to answer. The red finally said, "It's confidential, but you need to trust us when we say that it'll be much better for everyone involved if you tell us. We could both get into some serious trouble if you don't. Like, legally."

Deciding to pick his battles, Peter dismissed arguing against his trust and instead asked, "What do you mean, 'legally'?"

"You've read the Compromise, you know what I mean."

Peter furrowed his brows. What the hell were they talking about? "The...Compromise?" He asked, the word unsure and unfamiliar on his dry tongue.

Tony leaned forwards, swelling the red and blocking out the white behind it. "You've heard of it, right. International news? Only thing anyone was talking about last year?"

Peter sighed. He was more out of the loop than he thought, and he didn't like being reminded of it. "Look, I don't know about anything that hasn't directly affected me or Queens in the past two years. Just explain it to me and get it over with."

And so he did. For at least fifteen minutes, Tony explained the most relevant sections of what the world called the Sokovia Compromise, with occasional butt-ins from fellow team members whenever they thought he had misinterpreted certain portions of text. Peter had to stop them and ask them to start over a few times when the ringing in his ears suddenly swelled to a high-pitched crescendo.

Finally, when Peter's blood was on the verge of stopping completely at this document full of terrible news and thought he might just give up on learning all of this, Tony finished, "...and that's about it, I guess. At least, that's all that you need to know right now."

Peter was not at all thrilled. Not at the prospect of the government knowing his face, name, and overall situation. Not at the possibility of being sent to a foster home and losing valuable patrol time. Not of finishing eighth grade at the age he should be a sophomore. Not at any of it.

But what the fuck could he do about it? Fight back? He'd be overpowered in second, and probably

get lost in the gigantic building. Run? Again, he'd lose his way immediately, and if he managed to find an exit and escape, the costume was a dead giveaway. He'd be found straight away if he tried to keep Spider-Manning. He could always give that up, but then why escape anyways?

Peter dragged his hands down his face, willing himself not to cry despite the tell-tale burning in his throat and useless eyes. After a moment, when he was sure he wouldn't lose his mind in front of all these super-important-and-powerful people, he let his hands drop back to his sides. He was disappointed when he felt the now-familiar tug of an IV drip in the back of his hand.

"Fine," he said simply.

"Fine?" The stout black-and-purple blob asked. "Fine what?"

"Name?"

"Clint. Um, Clint Barton."

A piercing glare.

"Oh, uh—Hawkeye?"

Peter groaned. Did he have to spell everything out for these people? He was already so tired, he thought he might drift back into the black any second. "I mean I'll answer your questions. What do you want to know?"

The smudges all exchanged glances. Clearly, they hadn't been expecting him to relent so easily. But still, he'd weighed his options, and what did he have to lose, now?

Steve cleared his throat. Very obviously trying to sound professional, even though doubt laced his grave voice, he asked, "Well, kid, what's your name?"

"Okay, um, anything *but* that."

Steve seemed to simmer for a second, but Tony whispered something that Peter couldn't make out over the ringing, and he calmed himself back down. At least, he seemed to. How could Peter really know?

"Alright, well, how long have you been doing...all this?"

Peter knew that one. He shrugged, "About two years."

Tony spoke up next. "What powers do you have?"

Peter thought for a second, considered himself. Then, he listed, "Sticky hands and feet, crazy quick healing, super strength and speed, super senses—well, not any more," he took pleasure in the few flinches he saw, "and I have this weird sense that warns me when I'm in danger."

Tony cocked his head. "What about the webs?"

Peter started. He'd forgotten about that. "Oh! Well, uh—I've got these weird glands in my wrists that make the webs, but my natural ones aren't really all that strong, so I tend to make my own. Uh, chemically. And I made web-shooters, too. To—to shoot them." Peter gulped but held up his wrists, showing the slight lumps and holes above them, as well as the fading lines from where his web shooters constantly sat. Unfortunately, the tug of the needle in his hand put pressure on those odd bumps, and he felt as long webs shot out onto the ceiling over him. His body ricocheted backwards as he profusely apologized. Bruce and Tony seemed fascinated, even leaning in to inspect them. Everyone else looked a little grossed out.

"Fascinating..." Tony muttered to himself. Then, to Peter, "I'm going to gather that and run some tests on it. Is that alright?"

"Yeah, sure, I guess," Peter answered awkwardly, rubbing his head where it had hit the wall behind him.

Tony nodded, satisfied. "Friday," he called, "Send Dum-E down here to bring the webs back to my lab."

"Got it, Boss," a cold female voice rang out from seemingly everywhere.

Peter scrambled back into a sitting position, already in fight-or-flight mode again. “What was that!?” He asked frantically.

Bruce cursed underneath his breath. “Sorry,” he laughed emotionlessly. “That’s Tony’s AI, Friday. AI stands for—“

“I know what it stands for, Dr. Banner. I’m not a child.” Peter already felt patronized. Just how young did they think he was? How stupid did they assume him to be?

“Then how old are you?” The black smudge he now knew as Natasha asked coldly.

Great. Peter supposed that he had walked into that one, though. It was on him.

Peter weighed his options for a moment, but utterly decided against a lie. What would they do, anyways?

*Call Social Services and ruin your life*, a malicious voice in the back of his mind whispered. Peter hushed it immediately. What would they tell the social workers? Certainly not that they had no name for his kid, or that they had damaged his most necessary senses possibly beyond repair.

“Fifteen,” Peter sighed.

Peter didn’t bother listening to the uproar of concern aimed towards him or anger aimed towards one another from the Avengers. He didn’t much want to. He’d heard all the ‘you’re too young to be wasting your life like this’ and the ‘why put yourself in so much danger?’ questions from visions of his aunt and uncle before. Why bother now, from all these people who he couldn’t care less about?

Finally, when they’d all calmed down, Tony asked, his voice considerably softer than before, “Where are your parents? Why aren’t they looking for you?”

Peter stared him dead in the eyes. Well, probably. Flatly, although he felt his raw throat threaten to close up again he answered, “I think you know why, Stark.”

A single beat of silence.

Realization. Understanding.

A chorus of curses and pitying groans and whispers filled the room, but it gave Peter enough time to will down the dangerous tears.

The next time Tony spoke, he seemed close to tears himself. Peter was surprised at how fragile, his ragged his voice was as he asked, “Why do you do this? The hero-ing, the danger, *Why*?”

Peter thought that was already terribly obvious. “Same as all of you.”

Clearly, no one knew what he meant. Reluctantly, and with great disappointment in the intuitivity skills of these superheroes, Peter explained, “Look, I was already an orphan when I got these powers,” the painful word slipped out of his mouth with shocking ease, “So I didn’t have any real reason to use them. I thought I could just, like, show people up in gym class now. It was cool, at first. But then a sob story featuring my aunt, uncle, a robber, and a gun happened. One that I could have—could have stopped.” Peter’s voice cracked, so he closed his eyes and he took a moment to gather himself.

Then, he continued. “And it just made me realize stuff, you know? I didn’t want to have these powers, but now that I did, I had to use them. For good, I mean, nothing selfish. ‘Cause, when bad things happen that I could have stopped easily...then they were my fault. You all get it, right? Like now that you can do all this crazy stuff, if you don’t try to use it to help, then it feels like you’re wasting something? Like...like maybe you shouldn’t have been the one to get them?”

Peter trailed off. Sniffed. Gave a wet laugh. Realized he was closer to crying than he had previously thought, because it had been two years since he’d had a real conversation with anyone, and even though this was more of an interrogation, it felt so good to finally talk to someone that he wasn’t saving.

Then, unsure of himself, he mumbled, “But—I don’t know. It’s stupid, I guess.”

The Avengers all exchanged shaken glances. Then, right when he thought that perhaps he’d gone completely deaf again if it weren’t for the abominable ringing, Sam said gently, “That’s not stupid at all, kid. Not stupid at all.”

Peter smiled. It was shaky and sad, but he smiled. Hopefully, Sam smiled back. He wasn't really sure.

Then, Peter's head started to loll to one side, his eyes beginning to droop dangerously. Bruce, from where he had stood silently at Peter's side, said softly, completely breaking the moment, "Hey, you need to rest, alright? We can pick this back up in the morning."

"But I've been sleeping for days!" Peter argued, cringing at how childish he sounded. *Nice going, dipshit.*

Bruce, though, didn't depart from his regular professional tone. "Yes, but you've been...severely injured. Your body really needs to heal, and that means a bunch of sleep."

Peter grumbled but complied. He knew he'd have to go to the bathroom if he stayed awake any longer, anyways, and he had no idea where that was. He didn't want to have to ask for help for that, too.

Bruce nodded and continued, "Alright. Is there anything you need?"

Peter thought for a second. He was in the home of a billionaire. He could probably ask for the Moon and it be at the foot of his bed when he next woke up. So what was something he wanted more than anything in the world?

"A hamburger, probably."

The whole team laughed, and the swirling darkness and guilt in the room seemed to dissipate the tiniest amount, giving everyone a little bit more room to breathe.

"You've got it," Bruce told him. Then, to the whole team, he announced, "Everybody, out! Go do stupid shi—stuff somewhere else."

As people filed out of the room, Peter wanted to protest that he'd heard way worse than just 'shit,' but his body was already shutting down and turning off, so he let Bruce quietly close the door without complaint. Peter reveled in the softness of the sheets and warmth of the room, letting himself believe for just a few blissful moments that he might come out of this alive and mostly unscathed.

By the time the gourmet hamburger was delivered to his bedside table, Peter was already fast asleep.

#### Chapter End Notes

Comment or I'll cry

## Heard the Echoes Of Screams

### Chapter Notes

Yeet

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tony gingerly shut the door behind him with a quiet *click*. Without making eye contact with any of his team, he strode off down the hallway, grim purpose marking his stride and compelling everyone to follow, albeit reluctantly.

In silence they strode past the endless sea of crisp white rooms, their footsteps echoing off the walls like muted screams. Finally, when Tony was sure that somebody would begin complaining or yelling, he pushed open the door to the same conference room that they hatched their evil plan in.

What an ironic turn of events for what Tony was about to say.

Once everyone had silently settled into chairs or perched on tables, Tony, who stood at the head of the room, announced, “There’s no way we’re turning him in.”

The room erupted in overwhelming agreements and confirmations, with a few unsure faces and two stony silences. Oddly enough, he didn’t hear a single argument.

He didn’t know whether that was good or bad.

Soon, the chatter all died down, but before Tony could command attention again, Natasha asked, “Why?” Not an argument, not a rebuttal. Just a seemingly simple question.

Tony could have screamed, because *of fucking course*.

“*Why? Because he’s fifteen! I’m not letting him get carted away to the Raft. You heard him, Nat, his identity is all he has left!*”

"And what are you going to do with him here? This isn't a family, none of us are prepared to raise him."

"We can train him," Tony argued. "Teach him how to really fight, give him some hero tips. And we *can* be a family, Natasha."

"Who?" She scoffed, another bitter smile twisting her face grotesquely. "You And Pepper? Mr. and Mrs. Emotionally DIstant? I don't think so."

"Yeah, because you're so lovey-dovey yourself," Bruce shot harshly. Everyone cringed; they all knew what he meant, and her moments of cruelty and anger were most often exposed to him.

"I'm not doing it either way, so what does it matter?"

"It matters because he's a child! A baby! He is alone and we can't just let him go back to however he was living before this." Tony suddenly produced a crumpled paper from his jacket pocket, and as he smoothed it out loudly, began reading, "'Hypothermia, starvation, dehydration, scars upon scars open scars'. I don't know what Spider-Man was up to for so long, but it was way too much for a teenager." Tony shuddered at the thought of what the kid must have done to survive. He may have never experienced life alone or in poverty, but with a hero that small-scale, nothing must have come easy. He certainly wasn't getting paid for his work, that was for sure.

"And yet you were willing to turn him over to Ross when you thought he was an adult. You were ready to just give him up, let him get 'taken,' and yes, maybe tortured, three weeks ago. Why should a few years change anything?" She stared at him with those cutting eyes, so sharp they could slash through layers of him and see directly his deepest fears and doubts, ones even he couldn't know.

And he fucking hated it.

Fuming, he said, "Okay, for the record, I was never completely on board with this. Second, you heard him, right? He does all this because he cares about people around him! Why would someone like that go evil?"

Natasha didn't waver. "You mean someone who threw Steve into a wall and has so much stored up bitterness that he screamed at people who could kill him in a second if they wanted too?"

"To be fair, we did blind him," Bruce muttered from the corner.

"And make him deaf," Vision flatly added. "And knocked him unconscious and nearly gave him a seizure and—ow." He cut himself off when Wanda slapped his forearm.

"And what he did was an *incredibly human reaction* to being blind and deaf and scared out of his wits. Even if—even if we did cause it." Tony's breath hitched in the middle of his sentence.

Natasha, though, took all of the information in stride. "You know what else was a human reaction to unjust pain and bitterness? Killmonger's attack on Wakanda. Loki's attack on New York. Hell, Frankenstein's Monster rampaged because he felt like he didn't belong. But all of those things are *bad*. 'Human' doesn't always mean 'good'."

"Which is Why we have teams!" Wanda exclaimed, then shrunk back on herself. Wanda rarely spoke, anyways; she'd always been a bit shy, and the losses she'd suffered probably hadn't helped much.

"But a team isn't enough. *We* aren't good enough to keep each other in check. Why do you think the Compromise exists? Each and every one of you acknowledged that we aren't good enough. You all signed that paper, and you all knew damn well why when you did it."

Once Natasha fell silent, Tony saw that all of the team members were desperately searching each other's faces, as if trying to deny that they signed it, trying to deny that even with their immense power, they were just tiny little lapdogs for one infuriating man. And Tony found that he, too, was searching, like a baby deer who had lost its mother, alone and without something as simple as a rock to act as a sign or an anchor or whatever the hell he needed right then. Even Rhodey, who was usually composed beyond belief, looked lost in a room he knew every inch of full of friends.

No—not friends. Colleagues. They were no lovable, ragtag family from a feel-good Christmas sitcom. They were just people who happened to work together, sitting inches away from one another yet miles apart. And they all knew it.

Natasha, too, must have known it, because she slowly rose out of her chair, like a raven creeling towards the edge of a branch, and declared, "You can't hide this kid forever. No matter how hard you try, sooner or later, Ross will notice that Spider-Man is gone, and when he does, he'll trace it right back here. I hope you train him well, for his sake. At least make sure he's ready when it all happens." Natasha took a pause, letting her gaze sweep the room as if someone would jump up and stomp out with her, shouting protests on the way. Everyone avoided it, though, as if her dark eyes could kill with a single glance. Even Clint focused on his bruised knuckles. Quieter, almost

solemnly, she said, "I guess I really am on my own in this team."

Then, the raven lept. Natasha was gone, the door was shut, and the glass walls between them all thickened even as they cracked.

#### Chapter End Notes

Ok. Does anybody here watch bbc Merlin. And if so. Give me some good really sad Arthur Merlin reunite fics

Also it's tech week so i probably won't update for a week or so wish me luck I'm gonna be at school from six to two then rehearsing from two to nine then doing like three hours of hw hhhhhh

Also-also please comment for gods sake

# But I Still Have This Faith

## Chapter Notes

H

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next time Peter woke up, he was all alone.

Good.

But...he wasn't quite sure what that meant. Should he try to escape? No, there were clearly eyes everywhere, and it seemed that at least Bruce was trustworthy. A couple of the others were getting there, but he still couldn't be sure. Besides, with an AI like that, they probably already had every last drop of his personal information. They were probably lying to him with every second he was there.

But would he ever be allowed to leave? Now that they knew how old he was they would no doubt call social services...and tell them what? What name did they have? What could they say to them without violating what little 'trust' they probably thought Peter had for them?

Nothing. So option two was out.

But what about the people of Queens? They needed Spider-Man!

...Or did they?

Yes, of course they did! It was stupid to think they didn't. Because if they didn't, then what did Peter have left? If they didn't...

Peter refused to finish that thought. But it didn't much matter, because seconds later, or perhaps hours had passed, the ringing in his ears once again overpowered him and forced him back into the merciful black.

---

*Red.*

*So much red.*

*Red coating his face, his hands, forming a vile film over his eyes and tongue.*

*Red from his parents. Red from his aunt, from his uncle. Red from each and every person that he couldn't save. The woman with the pink purse. The man on the phone. The tiny child who had just gone out for a lollipop and had simply found herself in front of the exact wrong shelf at the exact wrong second.*

*Red spilling out from all of his wounds, every single one he'd ever sustained, yet they were all back, bullet holes and scorch marks and giant slashes from sharp knives covering his body in more red than any other color.*

*And bandages were right there, barely ten feet away, but there was a mountain of bodies between him and them, ones old and new, reduced to nothing but bone or still oozing sluggish red. And he recognized each one.*

*But still, he needed those bandages. So he had to climb.*

*With a suppressed shudder, he grabbed hold of a cold, skeletal hand. Some of the skin tore off and fell into his hand. He dropped it with a gag.*

*He grabbed the next torso and hauled himself up. He pretended he didn't see her wide blue eyes staring at nothing. Then he took hold of the next, though he had to pause and breathe through his mouth when a maggot crawled out of his empty eye socket.*

*The squelch as his foot went through the stomach of the woman from apartment 32B was horrific, but not more so than the crunch of Mr. Delmar's bones under Peter's feet.*

*Finally, he was at the peek, covered head to toe in the flesh of the ones he couldn't save, and all he*

*had to do was climb down, but he was so weak with so little red left in him, and as he took the first step down a body shifted underneath him, the smallest one yet, an infant that landed on its head after its mother was shot for her wallet. His foot slipped, and he slid down hundreds of bodies, thousands of responsibilities, gallons of red, red, red.*

Peter shot straight up in the whitest bed in the world, surrounded with white, so much of it, yet his hands were still covered in the red, smudging his palms, crusting beneath his fingernails. A strangled cry escaped his throat, barely audible over the ringing he'd almost gotten used to. Almost.

He needed the red off. He needed it off *now*. Peter swung his legs over the side of the bed and scrambled out, trying to find a bit of soap, water, anything he could use to be rid of the red, and even as his legs buckled beneath him and agonized moans slipped from his lips. As he dragged himself around the room, he rubbed his hands so hard he could feel the skin coming off of them in ribbons, sticking beneath his nails as even more red spilled out from the ragged lines, but in a way it was better because it was his own, no one else had to die for it.

Now his back was to the wall because he could no longer pull himself along, and he was slumped against it, using the last shreds of his energy to try and pull off the red, red that mixed with his own to where he couldn't be sure where the gashes of the people he killed stopped and his own began.

But then rough hands were pulling his own away, and Peter cried out, because he still wasn't clean, but he was so weak that he could do nothing, couldn't fight back the hands pulling him to his bed that smelled faintly of oil, a smell he recognized from the familiar splotch of red, horrid red.

Painful groans and cries were still escaping him, along with weak protests as Tony whispered to him, wrapping his hands in rough white bandages, locking in the red forever.

He could hear Tony whispering assurances now, things like, "Hey, just calm down," and "it's not real."

And he wanted to, so badly, but it was so hard when his bones were still buzzing and his head was still swimming with unseeing eyes and unjust skeletons.

Finally, though, as the red began to fade and Tony kept cleaning his hands, his face, his mind, Peter finally began to breathe again, breaths that weren't gasps or sobs, and he felt himself going limp, as though every last bit of energy he'd built up had been expended in one haze of panic.

He let himself be guided back under his covers, nodded weakly when Tony asked, “Are you going to be okay?” And suddenly he felt grateful, for Tony had come to help him in the middle of the night, and guilty for the same reason.

Peter mumbled out his thanks, although he couldn’t be sure he was heard, but felt he should do more. He could do more. He could do better.

So Peter fought back the black creeping into the edges of his vision, and just as Tony cracked open the door, allowing a sliver of light to cut through the darkness, he whispered, “Peter.”

Tony stopped in his tracks, and Peter could have sworn he cocked his head when he asked, “What?”

Peter took a shuddering breath and repeated, “You—you can’t tell anyone but...my name...” a weak cough, “is Peter.”

Before he could see Tony’s reaction, though, Peter succumbed to his heavy eyelids, although he thought he heard a faint gasp sound from the endless ringing.

Then, everything was quiet.

#### Chapter End Notes

Hoooooooo boy. HooooOoooOoOoOooo boy.

## In the Truth of My Dreams

### Chapter Notes

This Is Where It Gets Good, Lads.  
After This It Is Big Money No Whammies.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter was making progress.

Not a ton, and it was excruciatingly slow with how accustomed he was to advanced healing, but he could walk across the room on his own now, and shapes were becoming ever so slightly more defined. Now, he could make out the edges of the blue painting across the wall from him, although he still couldn't confirm what was pictured, and he could tell the blurry outlines of people, as if a toddler had drawn them with a crayon and a shaking hand. Bruce and Tony and all the others still were hard to tell apart, but he knew them now by height differences and the different intensities of his spider senses whenever someone approached. For example, Bruce held almost no sense of danger. Clint was moderate, for he seemed to avoid Peter but never tried to hurt him. Natasha may as well have been a huge red sign flashing the word DANGER.

He slept less. He ate more. The only thing that never changed was the incessant ringing that forced everyone who spoke to him to repeat whatever they said multiple times.

Since the half-assed interrogation, Peter had not seen all of the Avengers together, nor had he seen any of them but Bruce alone. And only one of them knew his name.

And that someone confidently strode through the door without knocking.

---

Tony had a lot on his plate.

It had been six weeks since the Avengers had kidnapped—yes, he said it, they *kidnapped* the kid—Peter. Three weeks since their first lucid conversation. Seventeen days since the interrogation.

Fifteen since the nightmare.

Tony Stark had known Spider-Man's name for over two weeks and had told no one. If he told the wrong person, it could slip to Ross, whether on purpose or not.

And Ross was a whole other problem.

The man had been calling Tony every other day on the 'Spider-Man Compromise Mission,' as he called it. Already he had arranged ten meetings, six of which Tony had skipped, and seemingly had searched every public building in New York City for Spider-Man.

And with those terrifying thoughts swirling around in his head, he stepped into Peter's room, too nervous to even knock, with the whole of the Avengers following close behind him.

They all filed into the room one by one. Clint, Rhodey, Sam, and Wanda all seemed nervous, if their shaking hands and pale faces were anything to go by. Clint, Bucky, and Steve were all rather blank-faced, and Tony hoped to whatever cruel God was up there that they were all putting on masks. He wasn't sure if he could handle the other option.

Vision and Bruce radiated calm, collected energy, he kind only doctors, social workers, and androids could turn on at a moment's notice. Natasha hung back, sly as a cat, watching silently from corners as she had since the day Tony declares that they would protect Peter.

When Tony shuffled in, he saw Peter sitting straight up in his bed, absently massaging the place where his fluids IV had been taken out three days before, staring at the wall with a glazed look in his eyes. It was clear that his mind was not in that harsh white room (they had tried to decorate it to his taste—Peter had refused everything they brought in). Tony, for the millionth time in the past six weeks, felt a spike of guilt. He could only imagine how bored Peter must have been, with no way to see or hear any sort of stimulation.

A second after Tony entered, though, he started and snapped back into reality. "Oh!" He exclaimed, gathering his legs up to his chest as his eyes loosely followed all of them shuffling in. "You're, uh—you're all here. Again."

Tony nodded, but when he saw Peter's eyes only half-focused on his left arm, he said loudly, "Yup. All of us, P—Spidey. And we need to talk to you about something. Nothing bad!" He added on when he saw Peter's eyes widen and face go white. "Nothing bad. Trust me."

Peter shifted uncertainly in his bed, but did not protest.

Hesitantly, Tony continued. "So, me and the other Avengers have been...talking," he shot a short glare at Natasha, who refused to look away from the window, "and we have decided that we need you to go back out there as Spider-Man. Ross is getting suspicious and crime in Queens has almost tripled since you've disappeared. A few copycats have sprouted up, but without your powers, none of them have lasted long."

Tony didn't outright tell Peter that they had almost all died, but he was a smart kid. His face rose at the news of returning to his alter ego, then fell again. His eyes downcast, he asked, "How, though? I still can't really see. Or hear. Or walk too far."

Bruce stepped up next, looking considerably more cool than Tony felt. If what he suspected was true, Bruce had probably done it to keep Tony from getting pushed over the edge by that comment. "Which is exactly what we need to talk about. Would you be okay with moving in with us? Permanently, so that we can train you to either improve your senses or work with what you have."

Peter immediately shot back, "How do you know I don't have a house I need to get back to?"

Bruce responded quietly, gently, "Because if you did, you would have already told us about it and tried to get there."

Peter blanched at that. His jaw clenched and unclenched, he licked his lips and crossed his legs so he was sitting criss-cross, smoothing out the blanket under it. A long moment passed. Then, he asked, considerably more dejected than before, "What would I be doing?"

Bruce already had that answer. He answered as if he was reading from a card in front of him, although Tony was sure he had just committed it to memory, "Every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday will be spent training with a small group of the Avengers. Who it will be depends on what we're dealing with mission-wise and the people who are out on missions. We'll start with some basic physical therapy, regaining your balance and seeing what we can do about your senses. Then, we'll follow up to basic combat training, then specialized training that takes your powers into account. The whole way we will be adapting the training to how much your senses have improved or haven't improved. Then, when you're ready, we can let you start to patrol again."

Peter paused for a few seconds, processing all of the information. Meekly, he asked, "Wouldn't it be too much work for you guys, though? With all your 'saving the world' stuff?" Peter tried to

pack the word full of venom, but he was too shocked, and it came out weak and floppy.

“Already worked around it,” Bruce replied cheerily, though no smile showed on his face. Tony was taken aback by his ability to put up such a facade. “We break ourselves up so that no one has to overexert themselves. Vision and I can help you in physical therapy, Steve can train you in strength, Natasha and Clint in hand-to-hand combat, and Tony, Wanda, and anyone who wants to volunteer can help with advanced, superpower based combat.”

”So...when do we start?”

This time, Bruce did crack a smile. “Right now.”

---

Straight after his breakfast (a ten-egg and a plate of bacon to rival Steve’s despite his futile attempts to ask for no more than a single small meal), Peter was led down yet another maze of white corridors to a small room that either held large murals that moved when he did or was covered in three walls by mirrors. Equipment littered the room, reflected a hundred times over, black and neons littering the space in an organized chaos.

He was taken to an under-inflated rubber ball that sank easily under his foot. He looked to Bruce, who held his arm, then to Vision, who stood in the corner of the room, dressed his usual human-skin-and-sweater combination. What was he supposed to do?

Bruce answered his silent question, “Just stand on the ball for thirty seconds.”

Stand on a ball? Peter could hang from a ceiling fan by a single finger tip! Almost scoffing, he stepped up, clutching Bruce’s arm to get him there. He felt it wobble beneath his feet.

Bruce let go.

Peter let out a small noise of shock. He fell off of the ball almost immediately as it shifted beneath his minuscule weight. Bruce caught him, Thankfully, and Peter glared at the ball as if it had personally attacked him. *What just happened?*

Wordlessly, he gathered himself and stepped back onto the ball, focusing so intently that his brows furrowed and his cheeks bled from where he was biting them. Copper filled his mouth.

He held for barely one second. He fell back into Bruce's arms, already exhausted, as if he had just beat up thirty gang members and gotten stabbed in the process.

"What the hell?" he murmured to himself.

Bruce answered as he righted Peter, "It's going to take a while for you to return to your former strength. What you went through—what we put you through—was a great ordeal. It's a miracle you're not dead."

"Great," Peter scoffed. Two minutes in and he was already ready to lie down.

Bruce laughed, almost patronizingly. It made Peter's blood boil. "Ready to go again?"

Peter gulped, then nodded.

---

Twenty minutes, gallons of sweat, and what seemed like a million tries later, Peter sank down to the floor and buried his face in his hands after yet another failed attempt. Bruce crouched down next to him, tentatively placing a hand on his back. Peter swatted it away.

"Hey, it's completely normal to feel discouraged. You're doing great."

"Great?" Peter muttered into his palms. "Are you serious?"

"Yes," Bruce insisted. "This is actually great progress already!"

*What?* Peter was weaker than he ever was before the bite! How was he making progress? "How?"

"At first, you couldn't even stand all the way up on the ball, and you just made a solid two seconds! That's incredible!"

"No, it's not!" Peter exclaimed, lifting his head to glare into what he hoped were Bruce's eyes, because he would seriously lose some effect if it wasn't. "This time last year I could lift a bus while standing on one toe!"

"Yes, but that was last year. Then—"

"Then What? You made me go blind and deaf and kidnapped me? Oh, great! Thanks so much for helping me recover from such a *terrible ordeal*."

Bruce's flinch was visible, even to Peter.

"Look, it was wrong what we did, but we're trying to fight the mistake—"

"Oh, and what a lovely job you're doing if it. I mean, you destroy my entire life—take away the only thing I have left—and give me a medicine ball and a hamburger. Thanks, I really appreciate it, *Dr. Banner*."

Shakily, Peter stood, only to stumble back down into a corner, his back pressed against the mirrors. Bruce offered his hand. Peter swatted it away, then used that same hand to wipe away the beads of sweat that plastered his hair to his forehead. "Just—just give me a second. I need to catch my breath."

Bruce backed away, nodding, and seemed to take Vision out of the room to discuss something that Peter would have been able to hear two months ago. The moment the door closed, Peter leaned his head back into the mirrors, feeling the cold glass on his scalp. He kept his eyes scrunched shut and fought down the burning sensation that threatened to close his throat. How was he ever supposed to be Spider-Man again if he couldn't even stand on some lousy rubber ball? How could he promise protection to the citizens of Queens? How could he put his powers to use like this?

He wasn't sure that he could.

By the time Bruce and Vision returned, Peter was already standing and staring at the ball, a renewed defiance in his face.

“Ready to go again?” Bruce asked carefully, as if he were afraid Peter would shatter like glass at one wrong move. Peter couldn’t say that fear was unfounded.

Peter nodded, and he was pretty sure he saw Bruce crack a real smile.

#### Chapter End Notes

If y'all havent noticed, this ones gonna be long. Like, l o n g, and I tend to break everything up into scenes as each chapter because I like writing i short bursts when I feel the emotion I properly want to convey rather than drowning out ten thousand words while pretending to feel angry. So bear with me, and if you're nice, we might get a happy ending. Might. ;)

ALSO FUXKING COMMENT I LOVE ATTENTION

## In My Dreams

### Chapter Notes

Alright, a lot of people have been saying that my characters are too OOC, but here's the things: that's the point. Literally all of my full length stories circulate around characters realistically reacting to their traumas, rather than them being used as catalysts or motives for ~\*•fun adventures•\*~ then being swept to the sidebar and forgotten (@ Both marvel AND fanfics). I write Natasha as bitter, emotionless, downright cruel because realistically her time in the red room would leave her with a disconnect towards human beings and a distrust towards human nature as a whole because her only social skills are murder. She wouldn't be the sarcastic yet caring aunt figure everyone thinks she is. Same for Peter; deaths upon deaths for him and the crazy responsibility of being who he is would weigh way more on his personality than y'all think. Aunt May dying isn't just a reason for peter to move in with Tony and have a party, it's a traumatic event and he'd be super reluctant to move. Seriously, y'all. If OOC isn't your thing don't read my story. I may enjoy fantasy and sci-fi, but it's all about the realism.

Anyways, enjoy the chapter! :)

Peter could hardly walk back to his room after his session with Bruce. Sweat dripping off of his forehead in beads, he clutched Bruce's arms with both hands, surprised he wasn't tearing the cloth with how hard he was gripping. Each step felt like his feet were made of lead, and he could feel his resolve weakening further. Worst of all, with his ruined vision, he could not tell where he was in the building, so he had no way to gage how close he was to being able to rest again.

And how had he made it to such an exhausted, ruined state? He stood on an under inflated ball for three seconds at a time.

He was pathetic. Worthless. Without even saving citizens, without being Spider-Man, why was he taking up so many resources? Hundreds of dollars of medicine and food, a bedroom, these people's time, *they hurt you why should you care?* shut up, and he couldn't even give back. To anyone. Not innocent people, not the Avengers *they caused this*, shut up! not even his family. He still hadn't been able to find their tombstones. He wasn't even sure they were given any by the government.

This pain was his fault *their fault* his fault *their fault*, shut up, *my fault, their fault, mine mine mine* shut UP—

“We’re here.”

Bruce had stopped suddenly, and Peter lurched forwards, nearly falling if it weren't for his death grip on Bruce's upper arm. Slowly, through heavy eyelids, Peter looked up. The door in front of him was a rectangle of brown rather than the endless white he had come to expect. He looked at Bruce, without even the energy to quirk an eyebrow in question.

Bruce, though, answered his mind's question. "If you're going to stay in this tower, you can't just live in some hospital room. So now that you're stable, I figured you should move to something more comfortable. A permanent room on the guest floor until we get something customized for you and your powers, but it's better than that old bed, that's for sure." Bruce laughed, lightly, carefully, medically, but Peter was so worn out that he just nodded shakily and let Bruce push the tall door open.

Peter registered nothing of the room beyond its monumental size before he fell onto the bed, face first. He was asleep before his head even hit the pillow, and his dreams were full of static.

---

Peter opened his eyes to pitch darkness. A spike of cold panic shot through his stomach before he realized that no, he wasn't blind, it was just dark in the room. He sat up shakily, propping himself up on his hands, and he couldn't believe how little pain he was in; his constantly aching back had been reduced to a whisper, his neck no longer popped with every movement, and despite the hammers in his skull and burn in his muscles, he felt better than he had in months.

He sat silently for a moment, relishing in the beauty of neutrality, before his growling stomach broke through the ringing that surrounded him, a constant threat to squash him into nothing. Peter's eyes snapped open; it's not that he wasn't used to being hungry. Rather, he was unsure of where to get food.

The past few weeks, he had been brought meals daily by Bruce, and ate them while being examined for any further recovery or issues. Now, he had no idea what time it was, or where to go for food, because there was no way in hell he was waking anyone up to get a Honey Bun. Even on the streets, he knew exactly where to go to eat a meal for a buck.

Then, Peter remembered something. This building had an AI, right? Couldn't he just...ask it the time?

Hesitantly, feeling quite stupid, Peter lifted his face to the ceiling and asked, "What—what time is it?"

To his surprise, the familiar voice answered smoothly, “It is two thirty-seven in the morning, Spider-Man. You have been asleep for approximately nine hours.”

Peter’s eyes widened, because even though he’d asked the question, he hadn’t expected an answer. “Thank you...” He mumbled, dumbfounded at this voice that came from everywhere and could track every seconds that he slept.

”It’s nothing, Spider-Man. Do you need anything else?”

”Um...where is—where’s the kitchen?”

”The nearest kitchen is one right, two lefts, one right, one left, three rights, and one balcony away.”

”Right...”

”I have been informed that you are visually and auditorially impaired. Would you like me to illuminate the path for you?”

Peter’s jaw dropped. She can do that? “Yes! I mean, yes, please. Um, thank you.”

The voice seemed pleased when it replied, “Again, Spider-Man, it is nothing. Commencing illumination.”

Suddenly, the room was bathed in white light. Peter flinched and shielded his eyes with his hands, but as soon as his eyes adjusted, he looked up.

He hadn’t been wrong about the size—this room was huge. The size of two of his apartments from so long ago, the wall was painted a light sky blue, countered by the deep navy of the plush comforter and rug. What could only be a giant desk made of the same oak as the door and flooring was pushed against the right wall while the left was lined with blurred bookshelves. And hanging from the ceiling was a light fixture that looked more like a modern art sculpture than a chandelier; over a dozen sanded glass cubes, all different sizes, hung like geometric ice drops from one giant cube attached to the ceiling. Bright white light emitted from each cube as if they themselves

were bulbs, and for all the insane technology in the building, they might as well have been. Not like he could tell if there were any visible bulbs, anyways.

"Spider-Man? The lights?" Peter jolted at the voice, and realized he had been staring at the vast room before him longer than he likely should have.

He shook his head and rose, mumbling, "Right," to himself. Slowly, he reached the doorknob, and wrenched the colossal door open, wincing at the burning in his muscles.

Sure enough, Peter could see a line of lights going about ten paces to his left and disappearing around a corner. Intrigued, hungry, and exhausted, he followed.

Far too many turns later, Peter found himself in front of yet another white door. He pushed it open.

The kitchen was...surprisingly small. A simple yet sleek fridge, a line of cabinets, a set of counters with what looked like a sink, a microwave, and an oven, and a single round table surrounded by four black chairs.

Peter didn't feel like this place was his to root through, but...clearly someone had allowed the AI to send him here, so at least he wasn't prohibited, right? Besides, hadn't Bruce told him that the...wherever he was was his home now, too?

It certainly doesn't feel like it SHUT UP.

He thought about just turning back, but his stomach contracted so roughly it threatened to expel its contents. Awkwardly, Peter stumbled towards one of the cabinets. He fumbled for a handle, and when his fingers wrapped around a cold knob, he pulled. And saw a bunch of circles.

Probably bowls. He hoped so. Peter reached for one of the circles, and luckily felt his hands curl around smooth porcelain. He let out a breath he didn't know he'd been holding; there were no robot guards in the cabinets.

Next, he had to find something to eat. Okay. He could do that.

He skinned his fingertips over the next cabinet and found only cutlery, so he grabbed what felt like a spoon and moved on. Next, he brushed a smooth cardboard. Soon, it gave way to another, the same size but with a crease in the middle that indicated it was a different surface. Boxes! Peter pulled out the first one he caught hold of and shook it. The bright blue box gave off a rattling noise; cereal! He didn't care if it wasn't Raisin Bran or Lucky Charms. It was edible.

Satisfied, Peter began pouring the contents into the bowl, cringing at the loud tinkling as the cereal hit the bowl.

Just as he dug his spoon into the cereal, he heard a gravely voice behind him say, "Uh, kid?"

Peter whirled around, nearly jumping onto the ceiling in shock. Why was anyone else awake?!

Tony Stark wasn't looking at him, though. He was looking at Peter, though. Rather, he seemed to be staring at the cereal box.

"What?" Peter asked once he had calmed down. Awkwardly, he reached for the spoon again.

"Don't!" Tony cried. Peter, against his better judgement, dropped the spoon with a clatter.

"Why?"

Tony strode over, putting the box back in the cabinets. "Because you were about to eat kitty litter with a spoon!"

*Oh.*

Peter recoiled in disgust, stepping away from the counter. "Well, how was I supposed to know?"

"You weren't," Tony sighed, dumping the bowl out and rinsing it in the sink. "That's why I stopped you."

Peter blanched. "Um...thanks?" He trailed off, and soon the kitchen filled with only the sounds of

Tony fixing some sort of meal, though Peter couldn't tell what. Silverware clinking and water running barely poked through the veil of ringing.

Peter stood awkwardly, hands folded over his arms. He decided to try and break the silence. "So..." he started. What was with him and awkward pauses? "Why are you here in the middle of the night?"

Tony snorted as he poured a jug of liquid into a bowl he'd been fussing over for a while. "I own the place, bucko. I can do what I want."

Peter shrunk into himself; who was he to ask that? It wasn't even his house, what was he thinking?

Tony kept talking, his tone light and nonchalant, unaware of Peter's Festival of Self Doubt. "Plus, I never really sleep. It's just not productive. But my coffee pot ran dry, so I needed another. And now I'm here."

Tony turned quickly and thrusted the bowl into Peter's hands. Peter stumbled back a step. "Here," He said. "Frosted Flakes, and definitely not kitty litter."

"Oh! Thank—thanks." Peter felt stupid, but made his way to the table anyways. He carefully sat in a chair and took a small bite.

Sugar. No poison. Peter hadn't tasted anything so sweet since he had bought a fifty-nine cent Pop-Tart at the gas station on 54th street. He dug in.

Halfway through the bowl, which took barely twenty seconds, Peter looked to Tony—or rather, in his general direction—to see he was fixing likely another pot of coffee. Again trying to break the silence, he asked, "Why do you have kitty litter if you don't have a cat?"

Tony didn't answer for a moment. He took his pot of coffee and sat down across from Peter, and up close Peter could tell his head from his body. Lucky him.

After a long sip of the black coffee, Tony finally said, "Pepper likes to be prepared. She always said i had a habit of taking in strays."

Peter couldn't see, but he just knew Tony was flashing one of those winning smiles at him. And he hated it. He wasn't but a fucking dog to be pitied and petted.

But the man had made him two-in-the-morning-breakfast and saved him from what was either a double nightmare or terrifying hallucination, so who was he to complain? Instead he just nodded along.

Peter was finished with his cereal in under a minute, and had to restrain himself from picking up the bowl to gulp down the sweetened milk. *This isn't your alley, dumbass. Keep it together.*

Tony took another long swig. Peter was surprised he was still alive.

Peter twitched. Tony drank. Both were silent.

Peter figured he should go now, leave the man to whatever important projects he must have had, but as he stood noticed hat FRIDAY had turned off the lights that led the way back to the bedroom.

Tony seemed to pick up on his distress and asked, "Hey, Spidey, you alright?"

Peter shifted. "Uh, yeah, it's just..." God, This was so embarrassing. "I don't know how to get back to my room."

Tony chuckled, a surprisingly warm sound, so different from all the cool, detached laughs he'd been getting from Bruce and the others. At least, the ones that bothered to interact with him. Peter felt his ears burn as red as a flame.

Then, Tony stood, leaving his pot behind, and grabbed Peter by the arm. Already being dragged along, Peter asked, shocked, "What are you doing?"

Tony replied simply, "Taking you back to your room."

Peter felt his eyes widen once again. Regaining his footing, he stuttered, "Oh! Oh, um, th-thanks! Uh, thank you."

”Don’t mention it.”

And together they walked. Side by side, Tony led Peter down a sequence of hallways. Even through conversation, he kept track of each corner they turned, just to make sure he wasn’t being taken to some underground torture chamber.

”—And so I had to find a way to store a ton of nanobots in a tiny space, see—“

*Right.*

”But then I thought, ‘what do I do if there’s a bunch of clothes already on when the suit activates?’—“

*Left.*

”—so I packed extra nanobots in every part of the suit that was black—“

*Left.*

”—that way it wouldn’t be fashionable, functional, and flexible—were here!”

But Peter already knew that.

Still, from all he walked, his eyelids were drooping as much as his arms as he whispered his thanks. Tony opened the door for him and clicked off the light, waiting until Peter crossed the football field of a bedroom and crawled under he covers to say, “Goodnight, Peter.”

Peter’s eyes shot open. He didn’t sleep a wink.

# It's All Real

## Chapter Notes

It's an information dump whooooores!!! Woohoo it's that good falling but also rising action time because I'm transitioning from one plot to another!!!! Get ready hoes!!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

If Peter thought physical therapy was hard, he had no clue what was in store for strength training with Steve.

For four straight weeks, he stretched each of his joints further than any ballerina ever could, jumped to the ceiling, and balanced by his pinkie toe on that unforgiving ball for as long as he was allowed to. So, Bruce decided to move him on to the next portion of his training: strength.

It was exactly how he expected: Steve Rogers, world class asshole, making him lift heavier and heavier weights every day, or jump from wall to wall with lead strapped to his hips, or bench press first ten pounds, then twenty, then one hundred then five hundred and then one of the machines in the room, and soon he was up to two tons again, and in a week or so he knew he'd be double that. It was outrageous how quickly his strength was coming back, really. It was as if his body remembered all of its powers and strengths that the Avengers has stripped away, but all it took was a bit of pressing and it would all come back.

Of course, that didn't mean Peter necessarily enjoyed strength training. He didn't know anyone who wanted to get drilled by Captain America on not working hard enough while they lifted two tons of metal with one hand.

Still, with gallons of sweat and (silent, hidden, lonely, in-the-middle-of-the-night) tears behind him and the only glimmer of hope on the horizon being the possibility of returning to Spider-Man, Peter pushed forwards, and along the way learned a few things about the Avengers.

For one, Bruce was gentle in a therapist kind of way, kindly comforting Peter whenever his resolve crumbled and coaxing him back up. Bucky, it seemed, wanted nothing to do with him, although he did sometimes wink at him from across the room, as if they were both in on some sad prank. Clint liked to lighten the room's mood, always throwing out jokes and watching people's faces to see how they landed. Rhodey made his dad jokes and sarcastic remarks, Sam liked to toss out his strategy of getting you to talk about your problems without you even realizing it (lucky for Peter, he didn't talk about much in the first place). Despite how close he grew to these people, he still

planned on bolting the second he was let out, and the less they knew about him, the better). Wanda was one of his favorites. She didn't speak much, but she was frequently by Peter's side, reading silently in a chair. She never pressed, never tried to artificially lighten the mood, and as his vision improved, he noticed that the light swirling through her fingertips became quite beautiful. Such a pity it was painted hideous red.

Yes, his vision was marginally better. He could make out crisp outlines of people now, and felt less like a blind old man and more like someone who forgot their glasses at home. Plus, he could make out the painting in his old hospital room now: a tiny boat, tossed around a dark ocean in a storm, with a gigantic wave looming over it, forever stuck in a moment of painful potential.

Happy times.

His hearing, though, was more of the same. Ringing, pain, and the feeling of underwater pressure persisted as the weeks went by. Peter realized he had truly come to rely on his hearing, and without his ability to locate someone four doors down based on their heartbeat alone, he was considerably more on-edge than ever before. A single tap would send him clinging to the ceiling.

The odd thing was, despite their brief yet insightful meetings, Peter rarely ever saw Tony. Any room Peter entered—which still wasn't many, he did not want to be around more of these people than he had to—Tony immediately left. It wasn't like Natasha, where she would shoot an icy glare at anyone around her whenever she saw Peter before storming off. Rather, Tony seemed...afraid of Peter. It almost made Peter feel that oh-so-familiar spike of shame.

Almost.

But Peter couldn't be bothered with that now, because after managing to lift a block of lead the size of an elephant, and ecstatic Bruce informed him that tomorrow, he would begin hand to hand combat training. "Of course," he added, speaking rapidly, "Because Of your prior knowledge, this section will likely only last a week or so. We'll just fine tune what you already know and teach you some tricks. Then, we'll move on to specialized combat. Obviously, if you're going to be one of us, you'll need to know how to fight threats that aren't quite human...Spider-Man?"

Peter had fallen asleep in his chair seconds after Bruce had started speaking.

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"No, I know, Ross, and I'll have it taken care of as soon as possible!" Tony slammed the 'end call' button, trying not to let out an infuriated scream. Every day that Spider-Man had not been 'found,' Ross got a little bit more demanding and, as a result, Tony got a little bit more terrified. It was only a matter of time before Peter was found, and what would happen, then?

Running a hand through his greasy hair, Tony heard a soft voice ask, "You alright?"

He looked up and saw Pepper, just walking through the doorway, a familiar look of concern painting her simple features. She set her briefcase down and started towards him immediately, her black stilettos clicking on the tile floor.

Tony, though, just smiled. "I am now," he said, giving her a quick peck on the lips before turning back around. "It's just..."

"Just what?"

Tony's smile melted off his lips, returning to the deep-set frown that he knew better. "Ross won't leave me alone. He's coming for Spider-Man like he's feral or something." Pepper gasped, a gentle, tinkling sound, like glass breaking. Tony continued, "He's started getting warrants so that he can search private buildings, too. He thinks that someone tipped Spider-Man off that people are looking for him, and so now he's hiding for as long as he can. Ross won't stop until he finds a boy or a body, Pep, and I don't know what I'll do when he gets the rights to search this place." Tony featured to the beautiful building around him, the one that held secrets that the tabloids were dying to know yet would be sick if they find out.

Pepper knit her eyebrows together, and without another word, embraced Tony, wrapping her long arms over his shoulders. Tony let himself be held, even as she moved them to the couch and coaxed his head onto her shoulder. And there they sat, for so long that Tony drifted off a couple times, just holding each other as silent tears and silent fears emerged and slowed again and again.

#### Chapter End Notes

Y'all. It's about to get so fucking real. In a few chapters???? HOOOOOOOOOOOO  
BOY  
Anyways you know what I want

## And My Heart Has So Much To Reveal

### Chapter Notes

No shade but I based the entire story off of one segment of one scene and it's in a this chapter so if it's not good I'll cry

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Fuck!” Peter cried as his head slammed into the thin training mats. The world swam over his now-useful eyes.

A bandaged hand roughened by callouses reached down, and Peter grabbed it gratefully, pulling himself into his feet with a grunt.

“Pretty good,” Clint Barton remarked. “You kept your hands in the right place this time, you only slipped up when Natasha distracted you. You were focused on her and you didn’t notice me coming up behind you.”

“She was coming at me with a knife,” Peter grumbled, rubbing the crown of his head painfully.

Hand-to-Hand combat training was going...pretty well, surprisingly. With his eyesight fully restored and four months of training and decent food under his belt, Peter found that even with his limited knowledge, he was already better at fighting than he’d ever been on the streets. Clint and Natasha worked him up from basic drills on dummies to two-on-one, and even with his spider sense rendered useless (Natasha being in any room with him set it off at full force until it wasn’t more of a hindrance than a helper), he had managed to take them both down six times.

“There will always be people coming at you with knives. I’ve seen your scars, so I think you’ve had more than enough experience in that field.” Clint cracked his neck, shot an amused glance at Natasha—who was staring coldly from the corner, wiping her knife off on her black shirt—and turned to the door. “Go get some grub, Spidey. You’ll need some rest for tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Peter asked, wiping his brow with the brim of his shirt.

Clint turned back to Peter. “Yup. Tomorrow. You’ve come pretty far with your training, so we’re going to asses your progress tomorrow to see if you’re ready to move on to fighting all of us.

You'll start off with just me, then me and Natasha, then we'll bring in some other team members, *then* you'll fight us all blindfolded—“

”Wait, wait, wait—what?” Peter cut Clint off. “Blindfolded?”

”Mhm. Bruce said you rely on you eyes too much, so we're gonna see if you can make it without them,” Clint answered as if it weren't a handicap beyond belief. Before Peter could ask him to elaborate, Clint left, Natasha close on his heels, never once saying a word. As always.

Peter stared frustratedly after them, then sighed and left as well.

Peter returned to his bedroom and grabbed a Rice Krispie Treat from under his bed—once, Friday had asked him what foods he liked. Peter panicked and said the first food to come to mind. Now, once a week, boxes of one-hundred jumbo Rice Krispie Treats appeared in his room—and flopped back onto the bed. As the first bite of marshmallow melted in his mouth, Peter wondered how he was going to survive the next day.

Sure, he would have passed the first two tests with flying colors, but blindfolded? His vision was all he had! His hearing hadn't improved an inch and his senses warned him of nothing but danger and how close it may have been. Without his eyes, he might as well have been regular.

Furthermore, he would make an absolute fool out of himself. He groaned just picturing it—himself, stumbling around in the darkness, getting pummeled again and again by Clint and Natasha until they took pity on him. He could already see their faces; Clint, with concern and disappointment setting his jaw and wrinkling his forehead, and Natasha, her gleaming steel eyes harder than ever.

Peter moaned and turned on his side, tossing his empty wrapper over the edge of the bed. He was exhausted after a full day of sparring, and Clint was right. He needed rest if he would even live through the day.

Peter let the dark waves in the familiar painting gently wash him into sleep.

---

Peter woke up, buzzing with nervousness. The second his eyes snapped open, Peter was up and

running. He showered, brushed his teeth, dressed in the provided red athletic-wear, and ate a light breakfast of twelve bananas before making his way down to the gym, where he was sure at least half of the Avengers would be there to judge him.

Surprisingly, though, his footsteps echoed through the virtually empty space. In fact, the only sign of life was—

“Natasha?”

She nodded in acknowledgement, though did not look up from wrapping her fingers in bandages.

“Where is—uh, where is everybody else?”

“They got a distress signal. Same old weapons guy. I would have gone with them, but they said anyone that fought close-range would be in too much danger. So, I’m on babysitting duty.”

Peter felt anger bubble up in him even as guilt washed over his body, but set his emotions aside and walked carefully towards the prep station. Natasha had now moved on to bandaging her feet, and Peter noted as he did the same that the splotches Of White against her pitch black leggings and tank top were oddly off-putting. Had he not felt like vomiting with nerves, he might have even laughed.

“Ready to go?” She asked, rising from her bench.

Peter stood sharply, cursing at how awkward he seemed. “Y—Yeah!”

Natasha nodded and lead him to the dead center of the training mats. Peter started to enter his fighting stance, assuming she would do the same for the first segment of the test, and was shocked to see her produce a long piece of fabric from the waistband of her leggings. As she walked behind him, Peter stammered, “W-What are you doing? I thought—I thought this part was last!”

She started to drape the fabric over Peter’s eyes, tying as she answered nonchalantly, “We’ve already seen how you can take me and Clint on. Without the rest of the Avengers here, this is really the only test left. Besides, I don’t want to be here any longer than I have to.” She punctuated her sentence by pulling on the blindfold, now secure over Peter’s eyes. “Can you see anything?”

Peter shook his head, and it was true; the thick cloth almost threw him back into the days when he was completely blind, but he willed his panic down. This was his chance to prove himself, to get one step closer to escaping, and he wasn't about to screw it up.

"Great," she replied, her cold voice cutting through the incessant ringing. Then, with no warning, she attacked.

Straight away, Peter felt the wind knocked out of him as a foot slammed into his chest. He stumbled backwards, clutching his ribs and gasping, yet was given not even a second of reprieve as, inexplicably, a hand jabbed him in the small of his back.

"Hear where I am, Spider-Man. Fight back." Peter immediately swung his fist in the direction of the voice, but felt nothing but thin air. While his momentum was directed forwards, a small fist hit his back and Peter fell, flat on his face.

Peter wished he wasn't alone with Natasha, he wished any of the other Avengers were there. Even Steve, whose moral demeanor had slowly grown on Peter, would our a stop to these sadistic games. Unfortunately, it was just Peter, an emotionally broken ex-spy, and a blindfold.

"Get up." It wasn't a question. Natasha demanded a fight.

And a fight she would get.

Renewed, Peter shot up to his feet, and smiled when he felt his foot shoot out and connect with flesh.

That flesh, though, turned out to be Natasha's fingers, and she twisted his ankle so he fell again, not even a full second after standing.

"Get up," she repeated, her voice harder than before, directly over him.

Breathing hard through his nose, Peter threw himself backwards with his arms, and the back of his head knocked Natasha's with a sickening crack. For a moment, he was worried that he'd hurt her. Then he remembered he didn't care.

He sprinted in the direction he heard her fall in, but skidded to a stop as he felt his toes grip the edge of the mat. He turned, about to start running the other way, when Natasha chopped the back of his knees and he collapsed.

This time, she stomped on his back, standing with her full weight. “Get. Up.”

“I can’t!” Peter grunted, his eyes scrunched shut beneath the blindfold.

“You can’t?” Her cold voice cut through the black. “Pathetic. I was killing men by the age of nine, and I don’t have any powers at all. You can lift a bus. Get up.”

*I can lift a bus. I can lift a bus. I can lift a bus.*

So he could lift a hundred-pound spy.

Peter launched his back upwards and felt her fall, vaguely heard her body hit the ground a few yard away. He sprinted towards her and got a good punch in before she grabbed his throat, restricting his blood flow. He scrabbled at her hand, feeling her other arm squeeze his torso. She whispered in his ringing ear, “I was getting stabbed by my best friends once I was five, and you can’t fight off a human? Try harder.”

Peter threw her backwards, and kicked in the same direction, smiling sickly when he heard the thump of a body; he’d knocked her down! Before he could celebrate, though, he dropped to his knees, squeezing Natasha’s torso between them. His hands pinned her head down, and for just a second he thought she might tap out. Then, though, he felt her knee collide with his rear, and his fell forwards, leaning his weight against his hands. She grabbed his right arm and rolled, taking him to the floor and forcing him onto his back. Now, Natasha was pinning him.

“Pretty good. But I had to handcuff myself to my bed every night until I escaped the Red Room. I can get out of a hold, even from Spider-Man. You, however, have no excuse against me. Listen to the room.”

And he didn’t have an excuse. So he bucked his hips upwards, and she rolled off of his body. He strained his aching ears and heard her light feet lift her up, carry her to his left.

"Stop holding back. Get me down and keep me there." Peter punched, but only felt wind on his shaking fist. She was already behind him.

"I only know how to kill. Beat me, and you can beat a few muggers and an alien."

He kicked backwards, but his foot only grazed her side. He clenched his fists, listening as hard as he could. A light flutter here, a teasing jab there and—

And she was right in front of him!

Peter angled himself a little to the left, aiming for where he hoped she would be by the time his punch reached her. He threw his fist with his whole weight behind it, the weight of his body, his anger, his mistakes and mistakes and mistakes.

His fist hit bone. Something cracked. Natasha gasped.

Peter stopped cold, throwing his blindfold to the ground with full disregard. He rushed to Natasha, who was laying limp on the floor, her face in her hands.

"Holy shit, Natasha! I am so sorry, are you okay—"

Her entire body jerked up, faster than light. In less than a second, she had his hands above his head and against the floor, and her knife was to his throat. Blood streamed from her nose, now obscenely crooked, and her eyes were more malicious than they'd ever been.

Peter's survival instincts took over, and he flipped her onto her back, the knife clattering to the ground and skidding far out of reach. Her eyes flamed for a moment, a single second where Peter genuinely feared for his life and his entire body went cold. Then, she relaxed, and slid expertly out of his dangerously tight pin, which he loosened once she started moving.

Peter sat back on his heels, shame flooding him. Natasha, though, seemed unfazed. In fact, she...smiled? Just for a moment, then it was gone, and steel reigned cold once again.

Unaffected by Peter's widening eyes at her short display of joy, Natasha plucked Peter's abandoned

blindfold off of the floor and used it to staunch the bleeding. Still maintaining her cutting demeanor, she said, “Good work, Spider-Man. Come here tomorrow at eight-am sharp to begin your specialized training.”

“I—I passed?” Peter asked, bewildered.

“Yeah,” she answered, and that was that. Peter fell onto his back, letting his eyes fall closed as a panicked laugh escaped his throat. He survived, and made it out alive with only a few broken ribs.

Between hysterical giggles and gasps, he heard Natasha call, “FRIDAY, send someone to clean up all this blood.”

Peter slowly stood, taking his aching body back to his room, where he would lick his wounds and probably fall asleep in the shower.

More than anything, though, he just wanted a Rice Krispie Treat.

#### Chapter End Notes

Y'all I am going tf THROUGH IT validate a sad babe in the comments pls bc writers block is kicking my ass

## And My Dreams

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter didn't actually sleep. The adrenaline coursing through his veins wouldn't let him, forcing him instead to slip in and out of a far-off daze until the sky turned from blue to sunset orange.

Then, as he predicted, Bruce knocked on his door. "Hey, Spider-Man," he said gently from outside the door, so Peter knew the mission must have gone alright, "Dinner is ready. Feel free to meet me in the dining room."

Ah, yes. Dinner.

Every night since Peter had moved into his new room, Bruce had invited Peter to eat dinner with him in the main dining area. At first, Peter had always declined, but when Bruce told him that he was often the only Avenger in the room (the others took dinner off to their own corners of the house), Peter ate with him almost every night. The food was exceptional; roasted ham drowned in spice and broth, sandwiches on bread imported from Italy, or if Tony gave the chefs a day off, Taco Bell was everyone's go-to.

So, Peter waited until he felt the sense of danger he felt whenever he was around anyone but himself to fade, signaling Bruce's departure, and rose slowly from the bed. As he made his way to the door, he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror. Disbelief filled the pit of his stomach.

His face, which he often avoided, had filled out, his skin tone evening and his cheeks puffing out, such a stark contrast from the gaunt bones and splotchy skin he had lived with for two years. His hair, which had previously stuck in greasy strings past his chin, had grown out into soft curls just above his shoulders. He didn't much like his hair long, but...it was a clock for him. He could measure the time that had passed between each stage of his life with every inch that added on.

(The bags under his eyes stayed as heavy as ever, but he pretended not to notice).

He shook his head and turned away. He was hungry, and focusing on how young and happy he looked would never fill his stomach. Expecting a silent yet delicious dinner with Bruce, he ever so slightly straightened his back and started for the kitchen.

Had he been the Peter from the alley, he would have heard that there were too many voices the

second he left his bedroom. With the constant ringing filling his ears, though, he didn't notice the contented chatter of fifteen people until he was upon them.

The heads of each and every Avenger turned his way, as if they had been expecting him. The talking cut to silence within seconds.

Then, Tony Stark cracked a smile. A tired, stressed smile, but a smile all the same. "Great job, Spidey," he said, more to the room than to Peter. "I heard you kicked Natasha's ass blindfolded. I can't even do it in the suit!"

Everybody in the room cheered, and although Peter flinched violently, he felt even his own lips quirk up. He glanced quickly at Natasha, and saw that even as she was silent, her glare had turned into something resembling the proud stare of a parent watching their child make a debut as Tree Number Four in the school play. The danger his spider sense had constantly associated with her presence had simmered down the littlest bit; she was no longer out to get him, but he was by no means safe.

Good. Neither was she.

Even as he thought it, though, some small part of Peter knew it wasn't true. He may have no real friends in the building, but vengeance wasn't at the forefront of his mind as it had been when he first woke up, months ago.

(He didn't know what was at the front of his mind. Not revenge, not escape, not training. The future was blank. He did what he was told and tried not to think beyond the next hour.)

Feeling better than he had all day, Peter took his seat at the chair between Bruce and Tony, straight across from Wanda, who winked approvingly as he ladled himself enough tomato soup to feed an elephant.

Over the course of the evening, the team discussed every topic under the sun. They laughed over memories of a member or two getting too drunk, debated over the line between freedom and safety, and cut themselves off when Vision mentioned someone named Ross. Peter didn't know much about this man beyond his part in The Sokovia Compromise, but from the way everyone avoided his gaze, it was easy to assume he was bad news.

Peter himself mainly listened and watched, nodding silently along to stories and offering short

answers to questions directed at him. He didn't enjoy talking as much as he used to, before the Red. All of his stories were painted with grief and guilt.

As Peter was finishing his fourth bowl of soup and moving on to his fifth, he heard Tony mention a new product he was working on. Immediately, he tuned in, even leaning ever so slightly towards the conversation.

As Tony described the new fuel he was developing for his rocket boosters, Bruce caught his eye and smiled. Peter turned white, knowing that look, the one so familiar in the eyes of his aunt and uncle and every parent about to embarrass their child. He was screwed.

Ignoring as Peter shook his head so quickly it might have been vibrating, Bruce announced, "I think Spider-Man might have something to say on the topic."

Peter cringed as every face in the room turned towards him, expecting and anticipating. Peter felt his ears burn as the silence dragged on, as people blinked at him, watching, waiting. He gulped, and hoping he didn't have a leaf of basil stuck in his teeth, said quietly, "Um, yeah. I just—I'm kind of a fan of chemistry. It was, uh—it was my best subject." Peter practically shrunk back into himself. Without anger to fuel him, he'd never been the most confident.

Tony, though, just smiled. "Really?" He asked. "Chemistry was never my real strong suit. I've learned it, but mechanics was always my thing."

Peter shrugged, lifting his head the smallest amount. "I mean, I really like it. It's just formulas and conversions, you know? I had to draft, like, a million formulas before I made my web fluid."

"Web fluid?" Steve asked, genuine intrigue painting his face.

"Yeah!" Peter said, gaining confidence. "Remember, 'cause my natural webs aren't all that strong? I make them myself."

"How, though?" Bruce asked.

Peter didn't know anything about fancy towers or aliens. He didn't know a scrap about rich luncheons or physical training or anything he had been doing for months. This, though was his element. He was about to dive all in.

"It wasn't that hard. I knew I needed it to be liquid in the shooters but solid once it came out, so it had to form a precipitate once it reacted with nitrogen. I tried mixing potassium hydroxide with chlorine first, because once it hit the nitrogen in the atmosphere it got solid, but it wasn't sticky or strong. I ended up having to do a bunch of different equations but I figured out that when I mixed potassium dicarbonate with the oxygen and nitrogen in the air, it ended up making carbon dioxide gas, potassium byproduct that went into another canister, and the nitrous carbon mixed with traces of the other elements was sticky, strong, and a solid. Then, to get it to be like a web so that I could, like, use it, I had to make the webshooters with a bunch of little rods stuck to the latch where it came out so the nitrous carbon formed a cluster of nano-tubes when it shot out, and then it was done. Strong, sticky, and...and..."

Peter trailed off; he had rambled, he had messed up, and now everybody was staring at him with some combination of confusion, pride, and curiosity. Peter felt the hot blood rush back into his cheeks and ears, and he slumped back down into his chair. He had talked for too long, and now they knew a little bit about him, he was a little attached, and that's exactly what he was trying to avoid, *stupid, stupid, stupid*—

Steve shook his head, and for a moment Peter thought he was in big trouble, but then he barked out a laugh. Then another. Then, before Peter knew it, every face around the table held a smile. They...weren't angry. They weren't annoyed or patronizing. They liked him. They *liked* him. At the very least, Peter wasn't hated or hunted as long as he was in the building.

Steve said, "Jesus, Spidey. I didn't even finish school, you can't throw all that at me."

Clint remarked, swallowing a bite of bread drowned in butter, "Cap, you can hardly understand how vaccinations work, and you expect to be on this kid's level?"

"No, I just expect someone besides Bucky and the immigrant witch to not understand all this, either!"

Dinner finished hours later with a final round of wine (snuck into Peter's glass by Tony as everyone pretended not to notice) and exhausted, hysterical giggles. Peter fell onto his duvet, stomach full and warm and with some odd soft feeling he hadn't had since the reddest night. It wasn't entirely unpleasant, though. It felt an awful lot like the ice in the pit of his abdomen was starting to thaw.

Peter smiled. He was safe. He was trained. He was happy.

(At least, that's what he thought.)

## Chapter End Notes

just a short scene to hold you over. Were about to shift storylines bb!!!! Comment I need validation or this writers block is going to kill me!!!!

## Seem to Say

### Chapter Notes

,':)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They came for him in the middle of the night. Of course they did, really. Shrouded in the darkness, who would see Peter disappear into the black?

Peter had no idea how they knew which window lead into his room. He had no idea how they bypassed FRIDAY so no alert would show when he was taken.

All he knew was that he woke up to a voice in his ear, hot breath whispering roughly, “If you want a soul in this building to stay alive, you will come with us quietly.”

Ice cold fear shot through Peter’s stomach as his eyes snapped open. He froze, every muscle rigid, unable or unwilling to move. A man loomed over his twisted form, and if Peter’s senses were correct, then there were points of danger all around him, ones he just couldn’t see. But Peter wasn’t stupid—the first thing he had learned in defense was to never let yourself get carted to a secondary location, and he wasn’t about to let a lie get him killed. He wouldn’t go without proof. After a moment’s pause, he asked the shadow leaning over him, “And how do I know that’s a real threat?”

The man laughed, almost condescendingly, and reached over Peter’s shoulder to show him his hand. Clutched in his calloused palm, Peter could just barely make out a remote, with a small screen in the center. At the top, a light flashed red. At the bottom, a single button waited to be pushed. And on the screen, shots switched every three seconds, flashing between bedrooms and dining rooms he knew so well.

And each and every one of them held a pack of explosive thermals.

The spike of fear pushed further, breaking off bits of ice to shoot painfully into the tips of Peter’s fingers and toes.

Peter gritted his teeth—the footage might not be live, it could be edited, old. The man must have known what he was thinking, for the hand pointed to the corner of Peter’s room. His eyes followed

it, and there it was—an unmistakable shape, black and square and covered in wires. Peter didn't have to ask what it was, the man explained that himself.

"That," he said, "is a trigger bomb. By pressing this button I will set it off, and if it explodes, so does every thermal I've set up in this tower. Come with us, and they all disappear. Refuse, and everyone in this place—*kaboom*."

Of course, Peter refused to go down without a fight. His training was not in vain, he took at least half of the hundred men strapped to the side of the building down.

The end came anyways, as a cold bullet ripped through his thigh and his brain went black.

*Sorry, Clint.*

---

Peter awoke on a cold, hard surface, and for just a second he thought he had returned to the alley, the Avengers had kicked him out. But the ground beneath him was far too smooth, far too clean to be the dirty concrete of Queens, and he could feel tons of pressure popping his ears and amplifying the ringing until he could hardly think around it. He was acutely aware of an intense pain in his left thigh, though it took a second for him to remember why.

Peter shot up. He was in a cube. Made of once gleaming metal that was now covered by a thick layer of dust and unidentifiable grime and lit only by light feeding through the cracks in the door, the room he was in held nothing more than a dirty steel toilet that made Peter's nose wrinkle with its sharp metallic stench. There was floor room enough for Peter to lie down if he curled around the base of the toilet, and the room was tall enough that Peter could stand straight up and still have an inch before his head his the ceiling.

Wonderful.

Peter shivered violently then, noticing he only had a thin pair of light blue scrubs to protect him from what felt like one of New York's harshest winters. He wasn't wearing them when he was taken, but he also was no longer bleeding out, so he figured somebody must have operated on his wound and given him those horribly out-of-season garments. Wrapping his arms around himself, he tried to ignore the sharp aching in his thigh and stumbled to the door. He shoved his whole weight against it, and had it been some run-of-the-mill wooden door, it would have splintered

under a fraction of the pressure. This door, though, held firm.

"I wouldn't try it," came a voice from everywhere at once. Peter leapt back into a defensive position as best he could in the space, but there was no person to fight against. The room was dark and empty. This was not the same voice as the one that threatened him. This one was smoother, richer, like dark chocolate flowing bitterly through a tinny speaker. "That whole room is vibranium, son. Even Thor himself couldn't break out of there."

"Where the hell am I?" Peter dared to ask. He cringed at how weak his voice sounded, but he felt like he was being thrown back into that old hospital room, only this time there was no Bruce or soup or warm blankets.

The door opened with a whoosh.

There, dressed in a sharp suit and tie, flanked by four gigantic men wielding guns of glowing purple, was a man who seemed more like a senator than a kidnapper. The hard fluorescent lights from what Peter assumed was the hallway sillhoutted him even as it blinded Peter, whose eyes were still adjusted to the pitch darkness. Politician in every inch of his appearance, yes. But Peter knew from experience that people were never what they seemed.

Peter lunged for the man without a second thought, only escape on his mind, but stopped dead as he smiled silently and raised something in his hand, a device Peter hadn't noticed before.

The remote.

Dread filled Peter's stomach and he felt his defiance began to drain away, not even seconds after waking up in this...prison? Peter wasn't sure of the word for it. Even so, he kept a defensive stance, his hands in front of his face and elbows covering his abdomen.

*Natasha would be proud*, he thought suddenly, inappropriately.

The same smooth voice that came from the speakers flowed out of this man's mouth as he said, "Touch me and every Avenger in the Tower gets blown to bits."

"You think I care about them? After what they did to me?" Peter shot back, and regretted the words as soon as they came out of his mouth. He had no idea what this man knew about him, or

even why he had taken him, but he shouldn't give away any more than he had to.

The man's cold smile widened, as if someone at a board meeting made a mildly funny pun about the stocks he was presenting rather than a teenager desperately trying to understand his situation. "Maybe you don't, no. But I know Spider-Man would never let a good guy die."

Peter's stomach dropped to the floor. *They know.* Ice flooded his veins, and for a split second, for no real reason at all, he wished that bullet had torn apart his skull instead.

"What are you taking about?" He asked, but knew it was no use even as he said the words.

Sure enough, the man replied, "Don't play dumb. It really doesn't suit you."

Before Peter had a chance to respond, the man leaned in close, his smile suddenly gone and his face only inches from Peter's own, and Peter could only think about how easy it would be to headbutt him and run if it weren't for the heavily armed guards, if it weren't for the button that could kill an entire team, if it weren't for his brain still trying to process everything because it felt like only five minutes ago he was still asleep in his far-too-comfortable bed.

The smooth voice was suddenly sharp and terrifying as it said, "Now I'm only going to explain this once, Spider-Man. You have violated the rules of the Sokovia Compromise, and as the current Secretary of State and leader of all Enhanced Persons Affairs, I have the legal grounds to detain you until you comply. You are not getting out of here until you give me everything I need. If you try, you know what will happen. If you so much as look one of my men in the eyes, you won't be waking up for a few days. In exactly two hours time, we will begin the interrogation process. It will extend with whatever measures necessary until I have the information required to satisfy the Compromise. You speak when spoken to, you move only when given permission, and you never call me by name. Got it?"

Peter had no idea how to respond. Everything had happened so fast, and even though he thought he had nothing left to lose, he still felt his world crumbling around him. Was this his future? This cramped box, these freezing walls, confusion and chaos and a man with no name?

The words *interrogation*, *violated* and *detain* were still swirling around the drain of his brain, waiting to be processed and understood. But the man was already stepping away, halfway out the tiny door, and Peter had managed to grab onto one of the sentences thrown at him. He called out just as the door closed, "How do I know what I shouldn't call you if I don't know your name?"

The man's polite grin once again returned as he turned slowly, opening the door another inch and staring at Peter with such intensity that he could feel those hard gray eyes bore a hole into his skull. "My name is Thaddeus Ross," he said simply, and with a gesture of his hand signaled a man on his left to enter the room. "And you just broke a rule."

The man adjusted his stance, taking his sweet time and clearly savoring the moment. Peter watched frozen as the odd sludge threw long shadows across the walls. Then, in a split second, the gigantic guard had aimed the gun at Peter's chest and pulled the trigger. Before he even had time to react, the simmuring substance hit him square in the abdomen. Peter shrieked and fell to the floor, curling in on himself, on what seemed to be a portal to Hell opening up in his stomach.

As the man left the room and locked the door, Peter could still feel the agonizing burn singe deeper and deeper layers of flesh, bubbling and melting his pale skin. He prayed he would pass out from the pain, as all heroes did in Hollywood movies.

But this wasn't a movie. This wasn't a feel-good family action. The pain wouldn't pay off in a hot girlfriend and a city-wide celebration. This was life, and pain only cashed in for a shrug and another dose of agony.

He felt his burn expand with every second, and knew somewhere deep within himself that this room would mark the beginning of his end.

#### Chapter End Notes

,':( not sure about this one, feels rushed but that was kind of the point lol. I hope you like it????????? Oh god  
Comment babes!!

## Don't Be Afraid to Go On

### Chapter Notes

Oh fuck lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter didn't know how long he had been writhing in the cold, dirty floor before the pain in his stomach subsided from an agonizing burn to a bearable sting.

He sat up shakily, propping himself up against the wall and stretching out as best he could in the broom closet of a room. With a trembling hand he pulled up the edge of his slightly-scorched shirt and gasped at what he saw. His stomach was covered in angry red blisters, and as the skin rapidly tried to knit itself back together, gigantic flaps of scorched flesh hung off of his abdomen. He tentatively touched a finger tip to his burn; immediately, the pain increased tenfold, and he had to breathe hard through his nose in order to not vomit in the metal toilet next to him.

Once he could move without crying out, Peter stood up. He had to lean against the wall for support and was reminded far too much of the freezing hospital room and Bruce and the blue smudge of a painting.

He couldn't think about that now, though. He was alone. He was the Peter on the streets.

*They might come to save you,* whispered a hopeful voice in the back of his head, but Peter shook away the thought. Even if they were on their way, him hoping so wouldn't make them come any faster. He might as well try to break out while he was here, because the darkness was already suffocating and wherever he was put far too much pressure on his damaged ears and he didn't much like the look of all these menacing men and their alien weapons.

Creeping to the other side of the room, Peter grazed his hands over every inch of the walls. No screws studded underneath his fingers, no seams let his hands catch and pull. Ross had been right; this place was a fortress.

Abandoning the walls, he went instead to inspect the door. The light that found its way in, he found, was blocked from two large places, and so unless one guard with extraordinary width was blocking his way, at least two people were posted on his door at all times.

Great.

So, what were his other options? He'd explored the ceiling, floors, and walls, and punching his way out was certainly the last resort (even if the vibranium was a lie, he didn't want to break any more knuckles than he had to). Then, Peter looked to his left.

He groaned. The toilet was the only way left.

Forcing himself to think of sugar and puppies, Peter grabbed the rims of the toilet. *I can lift an elephant with one hand*, he thought to himself. *This is easy*.

Except it wasn't. Peter pulled as hard as he could, from every angle he could think of, and the toilet wouldn't budge. "What the hell?" He murmured to the empty air, trying to ignore the frost his breath formed. As he leaned in to investigate, though, he realized that the toilet wasn't bolted to the ground. Rather, it existed on the same piece of metal as the floor, as if the two were formed as one. That confirmed it, then; the walls were vibranium, because even steel he could tear apart with his bare hands.

Peter flopped back onto the floor, exhausted, and forced himself to keep his hot tears at bay. He couldn't show weakness in front of his captors; he *wouldn't*. Cold panic was starting to course through his veins but he pushed it down, forced himself to keep his head until he found a solution.

Unfortunately, before he could think of anything more tangible than *fight and run*, two gigantic men barged into his room and grabbed him by the arms.

Blinded by the sudden flow of light from the hallway and still halfway lost in his thoughts, he barely had time to react before cold metal was clasping his arms behind his back. He strained against it, but it held firm. Of course. More vibranium.

As his eyes adjusted he was roughly hauled out of his room and into a gray, harshly-lit hallway, and this was it, if he was going to escape it had to be now, so without giving himself a second to back out of his plan, Peter jumped and kicked out, forming a midair split and sending both men flying into the walls.

He heard cracks of bones and wall alike but ran without looking back, turning corners at random, hoping he could find a door that was held by nothing more than an ordinary deadbolt. The pounding of his feet echoed hollowly against the walls, yet his ringing ears seemed to lighten their

load once the cell's walls let him escape.

Finally, he hit a staircase, and didn't even think before sprinting straight up the flights, at least three in a row. Up here, things were nicer, the wall painted a soft shade of white and abstract paintings hung in place of windows. It was decor for the living, the ones not damned to a metal cube, and he would fight like hell to stay in that staircase for as long as he lived.

And then the alarm went off. Adding another layer of high-pitches confusion onto his damaged ears, Peter knew that within seconds, Ross's men would be after him, and he knew he would not have time to take them all down before that evil purple glow found it's way into his skin.

He ran up another flight and came face to face with that very fear, held in the hands of at least ten gigantic guards.

He abandoned the attempts at climbing the stairs one by one and instead jumped from wall to wall, out of practice and weak. He heard the men's feet pounding up the stairs as they climbed after him, felt purple light streak past his face and singe his hair when he finally hit a window. The light streamed in and Peter could have laughed, because he could finally escape! He could get out, find the Avengers, get help!

He slung himself around the corner, prepared to punch his way through the glass, but stopped cold in his tracks. He didn't see a sprawling city or a field of rolling hills or even a searing hot desert. No, in front of him was nothing but an endless expanse of ocean, with no surface in sight. Fish swam past in schools, unaware of Peter's predicament, and he almost called out to them for help.

He was underwater. He was trapped in a gigantic vibranium building, armed by guards with weapons strong enough to hurt him despite his powers, and he was so far within the depths of the ocean that barely any light made it through the window. He was completely, totally, unbelievably screwed.

Still staring out into the water, his senses flared seconds before three guns fired at once. He could only escape one.

Dimly, through the agony, Peter felt himself get hauled up by his armpits. He cried out weakly as his wounds were jostled and his shirt, rough as sandpaper against his burns, scraped off layers of blisters. He felt his heels get dragged across the floor, down flights of stairs, and into a large room. He barely registered the way the pressure increased on his ears, but moaned quietly at the searing pain on his back as he was shoved roughly into a metal chair. His head lolled to the side, lacking the strength to hold it up. He could hardly think around the pain, much less process the cuffs

holding his hands to the armrests and the door creaking open.

Fear flooded his body as he saw Thaddeus Ross calmly enter the room through heavy eyelids. Peter panted as he watched the man pace back and forth, discussing quietly with the guards and overall refusing to acknowledge Peter's presence. Peter wanted to run, to scream, to rip his chair out of the ground and rip out the throats of each and every man in the room with nothing more but his teeth and his fingernails.

It was all he could do to stay awake, though, so when Ross suddenly stalked over to him, he just let his eyes follow the slightly blurry form. Ross leaned down, studying Peter like a specimen in a cage, so detached it reminded him of his invisible middle school days, hiding behind his thick glasses and a textbook.

Then, out of nowhere, Ross said, emotionless, "I've got to say, Spider-Man, that you've shown much more promise than I ever believed in just a few short moments. You survived two blows by the Toomes Blaster, cracked my steel walls, and managed to fracture two of my men's spines!" He said all of this like it was something to be proud of. "Clearly, your powers are far greater than you are letting on. I just need to know the extent."

Ross was pacing around the empty room, now, gesturing excitedly in a way that almost scared Peter, who followed him as best he could with just his eyes.

"I was considering even testing them today and scrapping what I had planned, but I need to figure out the basics, first. So, I suppose we will put off the testing for another few days and begin the interrogation."

With that, Ross stopped directly in front of Peter, his hands clasped behind his back as if it were him wearing the cuffs, him in captivity. Then, he asked as if it weren't a question Peter had been avoiding for two years, "What is your name?"

Peter, unable to form any real words that weren't pained moans, gave Ross the best glare he could muster. Ross's slight smile dropped. "Spider-Man," he said, his voice hard, "You are permitted to speak. You need to answer the question."

Peter only glared harder, as if his eyes could injure Ross in all the ways his hands couldn't. Ross leaned in, then, grabbing Peter's chin in his cold hand and forcing his face forwards. He could feel his hot breath warming up his face, and was almost glad for it, for the room was unbearable cold for his thin garments. Gray eyes stared menacingly into his as Ross said, "Answer me. Now. Or you know what happens."

Peter, everything gone from his mind but revenge, spit directly into his face.

Ross recoiled, wiping his face in disgust. His eyes scrunched shut and for just a moment, Peter saw a fire roar beneath the man's cool exterior. Then, it was gone.

He said nothing at first, just staring at Peter with so much anger it reminded him of the look in Natasha's eyes when her knife was to his throat. Ross, though, went through with the pain.

Gathering himself and straightening his jacket, Ross declared, "Alright. I had planned on a nice, civil interrogation today, but I suppose you refuse to comply." *No shit*, Peter thought, and had he been able to speak, he would have said it. Ross continued, "But, I suppose you don't like doing things the easy way. Fair enough. Neither do I."

Ross tapped on his watch—a StarkWatch, Peter noted with a bit of sick satisfaction—and within seconds, a woman in a white lab coat rolled in a metal cart covered in every type of blade, burning device, and syringe he could imagine. Regaining some of his prior energy, Peter shrunk into the far corner of his chair, panting in fear. He'd seen movies, he'd read books, he'd heard stories of Tony's time trapped in Afghanistan. Carts of torture devices never meant anything good.

"Now, because of your refusal to follow orders, we will skip to the next stage of your detainment. Today, this doctor will observe the extent of your rapid healing. Tomorrow, we can pick up the questions. You might be more...inclined to answer."

Without another word, Ross strode out of the room. Peter was shaking his head weakly, now, grunting through his gritted teeth as the action scraped his still-new burns. The doctor, though, just ignored his non-verbal pleas for mercy. Refusing to meet his eyes, she picked up the smallest scalpel and, rolling back Peter's sleeves, cut a deep, clinical incision.

Peter screamed through gritted teeth as the blood began to flow.

---

Tony had a love/hate relationship with nighttime. Sure, he could work in peace and silence, but that was only because everyone else was asleep. He envied them, because he should have been asleep, too. Such a shame that space, suffocation, and Sokovia filled his mind every time he shut his eyes.

So, he worked. He tinkered and upgraded and drank and invented until he collapsed and Bruce and Rhodes had to carry him to the nearest bed.

Even so, this night in particular wasn't so bad. He had slept for three entire hours the day before, so he was energized and ready to go. His blueprints for a brand-new suit were nearly finalized, and soon he would be able to build. That had always been his favorite part of the process, the ability to truly create taking away all of his memories of destruction for a few blissful hours each day.

That all changed when Bruce, rumpled and wide-eyed, rushed into Tony's workshop. Before Tony could even ask what the matter was, Bruce had sprinted over to him, fighting down an inch of threatening green, and said, "Spider-Man is gone."

#### Chapter End Notes

Hi writers block is trying to end me please for God's sake comment I need validation or this fic won't go much longer

# Don't Give Up Hope

## Chapter Notes

FUCK

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

And that's how Tony found himself standing alongside the other Avengers, still in their pajamas, all staring at a monitor that displayed the camera footage from Peter's door from the past twelve hours. Tony tried to keep his gaze off of Natasha in her thin nightgown, especially now that he knew why it took her so long to show up with the rest of them.

Instead, he focused on the surveillance footage that Bruce was scrubbing through, trying to see if anyone had entered or left during the night. FRIDAY had two cameras at the two possible exits of Peter's room; one hanging over his bedroom door and one mounted on the outer wall next to the gigantic window. So far, the footage was blank, but they had not gone through the first three hours since sundown.

Clint, sitting on the floor in panda-print pajamas, yawned, "I don't know why you're all freaking out about this. He's probably just...I don't know, blowing off steam somewhere."

Tony shook his head, keeping his eyes locked on the gigantic screens in front of him. "No. FRIDAY would have told me that he'd left. It had to be someone smart enough to override her that took him."

Steve remarked from Tony's right shoulder, "Tony, the kid was smart enough to make his own spiderwebs and shooters. I doubt he'd hesitate to hack the AI, and he'd probably do it well."

"No, Steve. The kid knows chemistry, not computer science. Those are about as far apart as you and the closet door."

"The...closet?"

"Don't worry about it. Bruce, got anything?"

Bruce, whose tongue stuck out between his lips in concentration, mumbled, “Not yet. Door and wall cameras show nothing for the past five hours.”

Tony cursed under his breath. Peter couldn’t have just run off into the night; he *wouldn’t*. He was sure it was something else, anything else.

He tried to think of people who could want revenge on Tony, who hated him or Spider-Man more than anything in the world, yet was smart enough to devise an intricate plan to sneak Peter out of the tower and alert zero security measures out of the hundreds he had installed.

Then, a thought struck Tony’s exhausted brain, a thought that surely would have occurred to him sooner had he slept at all in the past two days.

“It must have been Ross!” He exclaimed loudly, making everyone in the room jump.

“What?” Asked Steve.

Knowing fully well that Steve had heard him, Tony continued, “Think about it! He’s been after Spidey ever since the press caught wind of him, he’s been searching every building he could for him, and FRIDAY’S override? The man may be dumb as dirt, but he’s got some geniuses under his thumb. He could have taken him into custody!”

Bruce just hummed in reply, barely tuned in to the conversation. Natasha, though, finally responded, “No. Ross is angry, but he’s not that angry. He’d never break a hundred laws just to right one. Even he knows how many rules he’s allowed to bend.”

“Nat, the only rules that man follows are his own. It just so happens that most of them overlap the constitution’s.”

Natasha did not respond. Instead, she just turned her eyes back to the screen, watching and waiting, just like they all were doing, like they all did in that awful storage facility so many months ago.

Tony, though, couldn’t focus on the blank hallways and buildings before him. His thoughts forced him back to Ross, to the hundreds of messages and threats he sent the Avengers’ way. The possibilities of bandits, robbers, or vengeful villains who could have taken Peter were endless, but only one man could have done such a good job at hiding it. Only one man could have total

government immunity for ‘detaining’ an innocent person.

Then, when the time stamp on the footage showed two thirty-seven in the morning, there was movement on the wall camera. It was blurry, as all things captured by night vision cameras were, but it showed a window opening, a wiry figure slipping out with a bag and climbing down out of sight, and then nothing but the hollow wind.

Tony could have fit an entire melon in his mouth with the way his jaw hung open, slack and undignified. From the thick silence that hung in the air, Tony would bet his entire company that he wasn’t the only one shocked to utter disgrace.

Peter left. The kid just...*left*. No warning, no note, no explanation. Tony felt a ton of concrete fall on his shoulders, weighing him down almost as hard as the weapons division had so many years before. Peter could be anywhere in New York City by now, alone without his hearing or the Avenger’s protection to keep him safe.

After a few seconds that could have stretched into years, Tong heard a shuffle behind him. He swiveled around rapidly and saw that Natasha and Clint has both risen.

“Well,” Natasha said, resign weighing down her voice as she moved slowly towards the door, “I’ll go ahead and clear out his stuff.”

Tony blinked, then, coming out of his stupor. “Wait, wait, wait—*what?*”

Natasha stopped in the doorway, turned to Tony. “Tony, he’s gone. We need to clean his room, make sure there’s no evidence that he was ever here.”

“No, he’s just—he’s just gone for the night! Like Clint said, he’s probably just blowing off steam.”

Clint said, his voice low to match Natasha’s, “Dude, that wasn’t what a teenager does when they sneak out to party. He was wearing some heavy gear, and you saw his backpack. He’s not coming back.”

“Clint, no! He might have just...he probably just...” But Tony trailed off. Every set of eyes in the room was on him, all painted in different degrees of pity that made him want to shrivel up and disappear. Apparently, he was the only one confident in Peter’s return.

Swayed by a sudden confidence to convince the people around him that Peter wasn't a lost cause, that something must have happened, he said, "Come on, he's been staying with us for so long! He almost seemed happy. You all saw him at that dinner! He wouldn't...he wouldn't just up and leave!"

"Tony," Bruce said in his gentle doctor's tone, "The proof is in the video. I mean, I can go over it again and again, but it's clear as day. He's gone."

"But why *now*? After all this time?"

"Easy." Steve finally decided to put in his two cents. "He's finished his intermediate training. If he was going to be anything but a vigilante, he would need the advanced, but clearly, he didn't plan on that."

Tony was distraught; how did all these people just not care? The kid could be kidnapped, starved, dead, and they were all so quick to accept it?

His weak protests fell on deaf ears, though. One by one, everybody began to file out of the room. Some mumbled apologies aimed at no one in particular, some clapped Tony on the shoulder sympathetically, some simply left in silence. Tony knew they all must have felt the same, though; somehow, this scrappy kid from the streets managed to fill a part of their little team, and now that he was gone, they could all feel the hole he left in his absence.

Finally, the room was empty, save for Tony and Natasha, who watched Tony hold back the sudden tears that burned his throat, tears of frustration that only made him more upset with his situation. For once, her eyes were soft as she said, "I'm sorry, Tony. I'm sure the kid meant a lot to you."

Then, she was gone, a wisp of smoke lost in the wind. Tony waited for a simple second until he heard the footsteps of the others fade away, then sat down in the chair Bruce had occupied only minutes before.

He knew Peter would never just disappear like that.

(At least, he hoped so. He didn't know what he would do if another person gave up on him.)

He would get to the bottom of this if it killed him.

---

When Ross finally released Peter back to his cell, he had to be all but carried by the guards. They dragged him by his wrists, conveniently ignoring his injuries except for when they stained their cuffs with red. Then, he got a playful punch in the jaw that knocked a few teeth loose. His arms were streaked with faint white scars and gigantic welts, some still oozing thick blood. His fingers were missing a few nails, and the torturous doctor seemed surprised that they didn't grow back.

(He saw her clipboard for just a second, and was able to make out a sentence her looped writing which read, 'Subject posseses no ability to regenerate beyond that of a normal human, just an exaggerated rate of healing'.)

Ross never did re-enter the room. Peter was glad for that fact, though. Had he been given the option to go back to simple interrogation as the doctor decided to stab straight through his arm and test the extent of his healing around a foreign object, he no doubt would have taken the offer gladly.

Shame filled the pit of his stomach even as he thought it.

Soon, Peter was thrown back onto the metal floor of his cell, and before he could try to savor the artificial light streaming in from the hallway, the cell door banged shut, blanketing him in darkness.

As his eyes fought to adjust to light that would render even a cat blind, Peter instinctively curled his body into a tight ball. He whined as the movement pulled his injuries, forcing many scabs to rip open once more. For a moment, though, he was glad for the warmth of the blood streaming down his arms and back, as it offered a slight reprieve from the biting cold.

That appreciation was soon turned sour, though, as the second the blood cooled off, the freezing temperatures only affected his damp skin more. He shivered violently and resisted the temptation to rip his wounds open again, fought that instinctual need for warmth.

*The way this is going, Peter thought to himself, you'll need all the blood you can get.*

Of course, he didn't sleep at all. He had no idea whether it was night or day, but his basic needs didn't care. The shivering and gnawing hunger in his stomach kept him wide awake until the guards came and grabbed him again, hours or seconds later, he couldn't know.

## Chapter End Notes

God i wish I could sew

Also Comment Pls

## Come What May

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter didn't try to fight again when the guards took him by his shoulders and hauled him out of his room. By now his wounds had closed, but he had lost so much blood that even keeping his eyes open was a challenge. He nearly fainted in the clutches of the burly men, and the feeling of his sweat-soaked clothes scraping against the only half-coagulated blood that coated his back was almost too sickening to stand.

Once he set sight on the familiar metal chair, now wiped clean of the horrible red that had plagued it hours before, adrenaline coursed through his veins and he fought weakly against his restraints. It wasn't like he could do much, anyways—with vibranium binding his hands and two alien guns trained on each of his temples, he was as powerful as a sickly child.

Still, he wriggled and thrashed as best he could, so much so that it took nearly ten minutes for the guards to get him in restraints.

"We only haven't shot you yet because Ross wants you conscious for this part," remarked the tallest of the two. Peter's blood froze; the foreign burn may have been less painful than what he was sure to experience at Ross's hand. That moment of stillness was all the guards needed, and then he was strapped into the chair's restraints, vibranium cuffs and all.

Not even a full minute later, just as expected, Ross swaggered in, dressed in a sharp three-piece suit, rather unfit for the dungeon he was running. The man sniffed, as if Peter's very existence was beneath him, much less their meeting. He glanced around the room, at the two guards standing in the corner, then finally, his hard gray eyes landed on Peter's own.

Then, oh then, Ross smiled, and Peter's vision went red with frustration. Frustration that he was stuck in some stupid cage, that he was under this evil man's thumb, that he barely even knew what he was imprisoned for and had no idea if or when it would end. Contorting his face into a snarl, he demanded, "Let me go."

Ross smiled and gestured at one of the guards, and Peter only had a second to remember which rule he had broken before the back of his neck was flooded with searing pain. He cried out, but snapped his mouth shut immediately after. Just as before, in the cleanest and whitest room on the planet, Peter refused to admit weakness to his kidnappers. That only spurred them on.

Once Peter could hear anything beyond the constant ringing that had only been amplified with the blast, he dimly registered Ross saying, “You know we can’t do that, Spider-Man. The people said you were smart, but breaking a rule to ask a futile question is awfully stupid.”

Ross circled Peter’s vibranium chair, resting his hands on the back and leaning into Peter’s ear so close that he could feel his hot breath calming the goose bumps dotting his pale skin. “But I suppose I can indulge you, just this once.”

Ross straightened up, then, resumed his air of respectability, and announced, “Now, today we will continue your interrogation. As I had planned to do yesterday, and as I will enforce daily, you will be interrogated from morning until noon. At noon, we will switch to the power-testing process—“

”Why?” Peter interrupted. He regretted the word as soon as it left his mouth. Ross, though, issued no punishment. He seemed to be too caught up in the brilliance of his own plan.

”Well,” Ross explained as if talking to a child or reading from a list, “To satisfy the Sokovia Compromise, all superhumans must give a detailed report of their identities and enhanced abilities to the government. So far, every known superhuman has been either created under circumstances that the government already understands or has been fully filled in on. You, however are a total mystery.” Ross leaned in further. *“For now.”*

While Ross was speaking, the same torture cart rolled in, accompanied by the same dark-haired doctor. Peter eyed it warily, and knew what pain those instruments would cause him if Ross stopped talking. Deciding to stall, Peter focused again on Ross and rambled, “But—but if you’re so worried about the law, why did you commit breaking and entering, kidnapping, all this stuff you’re doing? And, I mean, look at this place, there’s no way an underwater torture chamber is legal. Like, at all. I have human rights, and once the Avenger’s notice I’m gone, they’ll sue you for all you’re worth.”

Ross sneered, and for a moment, Peter worried that his plan had backfired, and that he would surely be tortured worse for his comments. Ross, though, continued, “Oh, none of this would be legal if you were a human. Luckily, there is nothing in the constitution about kidnapping bugs, now is there?”

”*What?*” Peter’s eyes widened further.

”Oh, yes, Spider-Man. My scientists tested some of the blood”—Peter flinched—“that they collected from you, and your genes are only ninety-eight percent compatible with a human’s. The other two percent is strikingly similar to that of a Spider’s.”

Peter sputtered quietly for a moment, unable to believe that he was being denied so much as human dignity. He stuttered, “B—But I mean, I’m still mostly human! You can’t just act like I’m nothing!”

”Yes, Spider-Man, but bananas share ninety percent of their DNA with humans, but we still farm them and cut them up, bake them into pies, eat them like they’re nothing. You, boy, are *nothing*.“

Peter felt like he may as well have died the night that he was taken. He truly was nothing. He certainly felt like a bug, being poked and prodded at under Ross’s horrid light and looking glass. And as much as he wanted to keep his identity a secret, hold on to all he had left in life, his days would be an endless repetition of the one before if he refused to give in. Red upon red upon red.

And boy, if he thought Ross had forgotten to punish him for speaking out of turn, he was wrong. Ross pointed to a small screen mounted in the corner, one he hadn’t noticed before. His eyes widened at what he saw; there, displayed before his very eyes, was footage of the Avenger’s main training room. As he watched, he saw locks of fiery red hair fly around the room, chasing what could only be Clint as he effortlessly jumped from obstacle to obstacle. In the corner, Wanda stood, lazily throwing objects around the gigantic room with her magic and laughing whenever she smashed one straight into Clint’s face.

Peter shook his head, and hardly even noticed that he was muttering, “No, no, no,” in a constant stream under his breath. Eyes on the tower meant the constant threat of harm to his captors, his teammates, his *friends*, and he would rather die in that freezing, stinking cell than let them be harmed.

Unfortanetely, he could not fulfill that wish. Ross, in all his cold glory, lifted a remote control. “Spider-Man,” he said slowly, “you need to understand what comes after disobedience. You speak out of turn, refuse to cooperate, and I fear that if I don’t correct this behavior soon, it may stick. You need to learn the consequences of your actions.”

Peter realized what he meant a split second before it happened. A scream of protest ripped out of his throat barely a second before Ross pressed the button. The screen, focused on the smiling faces of Natasha, Clint, and Wands as they flitted around the room, exploded in a furious blaze of dazzling orange and red. Then, it all went black.

## Chapter End Notes

Things I wish i had:

Ornate sword  
White horse named Romeo  
Scarlet cloak with singer embroidery around the buttons  
Silk long gown  
Long, dark hair in loose curls that contrasts with pale skin and sharp blue eyes  
I just want to be Katie McGrath from Lancelot and Guinevere that's it please just grant  
me that one wish  
Anyways COMMENT OR ILL DIE

# I Know It All Will Come Back

## Chapter Notes

FUCK

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Red flared. The camera cracked. The screen went to static.

Peter screamed. An almost inhuman noise of agony clawed its way out of his throat as he watched the people who hurt him, kidnapped him, trained him, befriended him burn to nothing but ash. His throat burned, but he couldn't bring himself to care, because there was no way it burned more than the bodies he could no longer see. He fought against his freezing restraints, thrashing in the inescapable chair even as his mind told him that it was futile. All he could truly understand was that he had failed. Again, he had screwed up. Again, he had lost the only people that meant anything to him. And again, it was all his fault

Peter slumped over in his chair, sudden sobs wracking his body. Tears slid down his cheeks and fell into his lap. He wouldn't be able to contain them if he tried. His chin hit his chest, and he knew it was all over. No one on the planet knew he was alive beyond the men in the bunker.

Wanda, her quiet beauty, her twirling wisps of magic, gone forever. Clint would never let loose another snarky comeback between bites of pizza. Even Natasha, deadly as a dagger's gleaming blade, had given him some sense of pride whenever she looked at him with anything other than malice, and now her bones would shatter and mix with shrapnel as her flesh melted away. Peter's stomach flipped just thinking about it.

They were gone. And it was all because of him.

His sobs did not subside as Ross took hold of his chin, forcing their eyes to meet. Peter was sure he looked a mess, with tear-stained cheeks and blotchy skin and blood streaming down the armrests from where the restraints had cut his skin down to the bone as he thrashed against them. Peter could hardly see Ross through his tears, but one thing registered in his overwhelmed mind.

Ross was smiling. The sick bastard had just pressed a button to obliterate an entire team of people, and he had the audacity to smile while he did it.

"Now, Spider-Man, did that hurt you?"

Peter said nothing, still gasping for breath between shakes and sobs. Unsatisfied by his lack of reply, Ross dropped his smile, lifted his hand, and smacked Peter across the face. Peter felt the skin on his cheek burn, felt his head snap to the side, but hardly registered it.

"Did that hurt you?" Ross repeated, more insistent.

Peter nodded weakly and closed his eyes, still caught up in his own mistakes. If he had just complied, if he hadn't fought back, if he had let himself be Ross's chew toy until he was inevitably used up and thrown away, this wouldn't have happened. The Avengers would still be alive, untouched, unburned, free of red.

Again, Ross's voice floated surreally past his ringing ears. "And you agree that if you had followed my rules, none of this would have happened? That your friends would still be safe and happy?"

Again, Peter nodded. This was all his fault. He should have listened to Ross, should have been better.

"So what if I told you that you still have a chance to redeem yourself?"

Peter's eyes shot open. Ross smirked, clearly satisfied at his reaction. Peter didn't dare ask what he meant. He didn't dare break another rule.

"What if...I only destroyed that one room? The blast was isolated to the training facility and every other Avenger in the tower was still safe?"

Peter's breath caught in his throat. They could be...alive? He would have a few drops of blood less on his hands?

"You may speak, Spider-Man."

It took a moment for Peter to find his voice. After a short bout of shivers, he replied weakly, "I...I

wouldn't believe it."

"You wouldn't? Well, then I guess I ought to give you proof." Ross tapped the screen of his watch and gestured to the wall mounted monitor. Peter followed his finger and gasped at what he saw. Footage, rotating between five different cameras in three second intervals, showed all the other Avengers safe, going about their days. Tony, looking through a computer in his workshop. Bruce, reading a novel thicker than his head next to Sam, who was trying to teach Steve how to play Mario Kart. Bucky quietly staring out a window, Rhodey asleep in his room. All of the resident Avengers, safe, happy, *alive*.

Peter almost didn't believe it. He turned his head back to Ross, his eyes asking a question his mouth wouldn't dare: *Is this real?*

Ross seemed to understand and nodded slightly, almost imperceptibly.

Peter didn't know how to react. His body did, though. Tears, which had stopped flowing for a few blissful minutes, again streamed down his face as relief flooded his body, making him slump over in his chair. Then, guilt, crushing him further down. Guilt, because he had still killed three people, and here he was crying tears of happiness, tears of tenderness, tears of thanks.

Seemingly unaware of Peter's inner turmoil, Ross said, "So, you can still control whether or not the rest of the Avengers live or die. You break a rule, refuse a question, or do anything to cross me or another of my workers, another one of them turns to dust. However, if you comply throughout the entire interrogation process, I might just let you see them one last time. Got it?"

The words almost flew over Peter's head as he tried to keep breathing, tried to understand all that was happening around him. Even so, he understood the general threat of the message, and nodded weakly. "Yes," he forced out, choked with tears.

"Good," Ross said, dragging over a cushioned chair that had been kept in the corner to face Peter. He sat in it and placed his elbows on his knees so that his eyes were level with Peter's. His feet were spread apart, and he looked almost like a schoolgirl gossiping about her crush. If that schoolgirl had a heart of ice and no remorse for murder.

"Now, let's start off easy, shall we? What is your name?"

And there it was. The question Peter had avoided for two years, almost three, now. The question

he refused to answer even for the Avengers, because it was his final possession, the only thing he had that was truly his.

Peter lifted his head with great effort and looked Ross in the eyes, savored his last moment of privacy and freedom. He felt a grim finality settle over him, almost reassuring in a way. He no longer had any choice, and he knew all too well that the single path of pain was easier to take when there was no other way out.

Then, with a shuddering breath, he whispered, "Peter Parker."

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Wherever Tony looker in FRIDAY's code, he found nothing to indicate any meddling. There were no breaks in the code, no foreign viruses, no differing strings of commands that he hadn't installed. He'd hardly eaten, slept, or bathed, and had not left the computer except to refill his coffee mug and grab stacks of paper and pens. Tony wished he could deny it, but computers didn't lie; the video was real. Three days ago, Peter had left the tower, and hadn't come back.

The door to his workshop opened with a loud *whoosh* as Tony quadruple checked his coding, going through any possible error he could have missed. "Ever heard of knocking?" He called.

"Nope. Just returning your little favor," Natasha replied. Tony looked up from his work to see her dabbing her forehead free of sweat, fresh from unneeded training. He knew why she did it, it was the same reason he went through computer parts that he knew were all perfectly fine; it gave her something to do, something to focus on when her time seemed aimless.

"Mm," he hummed, going back to his math. "At least I had a reason. Why are you here, again?"

"To tell you to stop."

Tony dropped his pen. "What?"

Natasha walked closer, slinging her towel over her shoulder. "To stop, Stark. You've checked every camera in the building five times, and none of them show any signs of tampering. We've got bigger fish to fry than looking for some kid who doesn't want to be found."

"What are you suggesting?" He asked warily.

"Leave the kid alone. He'll be back to Spider-ing in a few weeks, and then we'll know he's okay. If he doesn't, he's probably trying to lay low so we don't force him to come back. For now, though, Pepper needs you to show at some board meeting for her company in two hours, and she says you're sleeping on the couch if you skip out on it."

Tony didn't respond. He stared at the equations spread out before him, trying to derive answers to inexplicable problems from numbers that could be balanced and rational even when he couldn't.

Natasha's voice softened and Tony felt her slim fingers grasp his shoulder. "You've got to get back in the game, Tony. Spider-Man is gone, but you're still an Avenger. You don't have the luxury of grief."

And with that, she turned and left the room, her footsteps light and silent yet carrying an undeniable weight. She was right, though. The case was closed. The numbers didn't lie, and Tony had too much shit to do to pretend that they did.

With one final sigh, he shut down his computer, swept his paper work into a random drawer, and walked towards the exit.

Standing in the open doorway, Tony turned. He stared back at the black computer screen, overcome with a heavy wistfulness. He allowed himself five seconds to remember, to mourn, to say goodbye to a kid he never truly knew.

"Bye, Peter," he whispered, then left to get ready for his meeting.

#### Chapter End Notes

Ok here's the thing. I know exactly where I want this story to go. I know how I want the climax, I know how I want the falling action, and I know my resolution. All I need to figure out. Is HOW LONG TO DRAG THIS PART OUT  
anyways comment babes

## One day

### Chapter Notes

Time lapse, kids, it's time lapse time!!! I hope you all like reading montages!!!!  
Woohoo!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

On the third day, they shaved his head.

The doctor studied him like a specimen, scanning him up and down and back up again. She glanced down at her clipboard, then back to him. She tapped her pencil to her mouth, and Peter could see the wheels turning in her head. Then, in a voice like wind chimes, she told the guards, "Remove the specimen's hair. I need to examine his skull." Peter's eyes widened, but he forced himself to hold still while one of the brutes grabbed him by the chin and forced his head to rest painfully on his chest. The other produced a razor from the Mary-Poppins-Torture-Cart and began his job. The man hacked away at his head, and Peter watched in detached anger as his greasy brown hair fell to the floor in dark locks, his only time marker, gone forever. He was by no means careful, but Peter forced himself not to flinch as the razor formed nicks, then cuts, and a few flowing gashes.

Of course, that was nothing compared to what the doctor did once they were finished. No matter what happened in his life, no matter how many therapists he saw, the feeling of his scalp being peeled back from his skull would reside only in the deepest sections of his memory, right beside his uncle's warm corpse.

And so Peter's life went. Every morning, a series of questions from Ross, who now knew his mother's maiden name, his old apartment address, and the exact date his aunt and uncle died. Peter's stomach flipped every time he remembered that Ross knew more about him than the remaining Avengers. Then it flipped again when he realized it was his fault that he had to categorize the remaining Avengers from the ones he killed.

After the first few vomit sessions, Peter realized that unless he wanted to starve to death, he needed to stop thinking so hard.

Then, at noon, Ross would leave and motion the doctor in. That doctor, who otherwise never spoke or looked him in the eyes, would prick his skin and break his bones and hang him upside down by his toes for hours on end to test some limits of his powers that he was not permitted to know. By the third torture session, Peter gave up holding in his cries. They had already seen him at his lowest

point, anyways, and if screaming until his voice gave out eased the pain of a blade slicing down his spine, then who was he to deny himself that relief?

*A murderer, a screw up, a lost nobody,* whispered the familiar voice in his head, the one that sounded all too much like his aunt. He pushed it away during what he assumed was the day. He had much more to worry about, then. It always came back at night, though, in the hours between his torment.

He never showered, but he did receive the small mercy of a bucket of ice-cold water being dumped over his head whenever the doctor could no longer see his skin through the layers of blood. The guards were kind enough to supply him with meals, though. Usually, a glass of water and a drippy gray sludge of what he hoped was oatmeal was haphazardly thrown through the door after each ‘testing session,’ and at least half of it didn’t splatter onto the walls. Occasionally, the guards would give him their leftovers, scraps of cold restaurant food or moldy takeout, and despite his better judgement, Peter wolfed it down each and every time. One day, ten or so sessions after he had arrived, someone gave him a room-temperature piece of fried chicken. Lucky him.

And the toilet...he tried not to think about that.

His Spider-Sense was useless. In a world where nothing but danger existed, his aimless sixth sense was about the same as someone standing next to him, screaming *SOMETHING’S WRONG* in his ear all hours of the day.

Of course, not that he’d be able to make out what they were screaming anyways. So far underwater, the ringing in his ears swelled to a constant shriek, one that forced his eyes awake in the dead of night and brought tears to his eyes whenever his prison tilted with the waves.

The day brought pain of the body. The night brought a different kind.

When Peter was alone, laying on the freezing floor, staring into the darkness and feeling his body work too hard to close his would-be fatal wounds, he would think about all the beautiful things he was missing. He hadn’t felt the Sun in weeks, nor had he been able to look up and see the Moon. Some nights, he still twisted onto his back as he fell asleep, expecting to see a star-dotting sky and being greeted with only darkness.

Peter tried his best not to cry. He would sometimes bend over in his cell, his body wracked with sobs so violent he feared he may be having a seizure, but tears no longer fell. Between his one cup of water a day and whatever he could catch in his mouth from the guards ‘showers,’ he was dehydrated enough as it was. Some nights, though, he thought about the life he used to have, the

beautiful one where his parents would take him out for ice cream whenever he made a perfect score on a test. The one where he would go to the park with his uncle and pick flowers to give to his aunt, who was always so exhausted after she came home from work. The one where he had a family, a home, no responsibility beyond getting into college and no powers other than his brain. The one that had been taken from him, bit by bit, until he ended up here. In a freezing cold cell with guns trained on his head and interrogations every single morning. If he didn't know any better, Peter might mistake himself for some sort of criminal.

Even without his home, his family, he missed the streets. His heart ached hollowly some nights, when he thought back to the meals of fifty-cent Honey Buns and the way he would fly free through the city without a care in the world. He missed the rush of adrenaline he got in each and every mugging, the unbridled joy he felt whenever he stopped on a tall building and gazed out over his city, the one he worked so hard to protect, up and running and so full of life. Such a sharp contrast from his stinking cell, with only sludge to love and red to look forwards to.

At least it was all his own. Nobody was getting hurt but him, as long as he stayed silent, kept his head down, gritted his teeth through the experiments and tried with all his might to survive, even though he wasn't sure why.

*What do you have to live for, here?*

He pushed the thought away.

What felt like seconds after he was tossed to the floor, just like every other day, the door slammed open and two guards hauled him to his feet, deliberately jostling his injuries. Peter just sighed.

This was his life, now. Torture and questions and being sneered at like a bug that Ross wanted desperately to crush under his shoe. He didn't have time to think about all that now, though. Session sixty-two started in ten minutes.

#### Chapter End Notes

I made a cake. It falls apart when you eat it but god does it taste good  
Anyways pls comment y'all know the drill

## Somewhere Down This Road

### Chapter Notes

God I'm so excited about where this is going sorry I'm spamming lol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

That day's session went like most. Questions that hardly made sense and seemed to act as only time fillers, a five minute break while the doctor set up whatever she had in store (today, she electrocuted and burned his hands to see how they affected the tiny hairs that made them sticky), a quick 'shower,' and the agonizing half-drag, half-walk back to his cell.

His screaming hands scraped the ground painfully with every stair they descended, but Peter had become a master at blocking out the pain. He let his skin rub off in huge flakes, thinking of nothing in particular. All important thoughts had been pushed away long ago.

A minute or so in, though, the guards propped him against the wall and told him gruffly to, "stay put." Then, they hurried through a hand-scanner protected door as he blinked dully at the wall in front of him. This was no special affair—his escorts often left him alone when they knew he was too beaten up to escape. Even if he physically could, it wasn't like he would every try to run. If he couldn't protect people as Spider-Man, he could at least keep the Avengers alive.

He sighed. Recently the stops had become more frequent, but never enough to raise suspicion. They were probably just growing more confident in his inability to leave. Peter chuckled darkly at the thought.

Peter held his shaking palms in his lap as he waited, keeping his eyes on the drab gray wall before him to avoid surveying what felt like a tapestry of blisters and burns painting his skin. The burn felt like someone had scraped his hands with sandpaper for hours on end, but his mind gratefully drifted off to a gentler place. In his little daydreams, he imagined the hundreds of ways he might escape, as he had each day for more than two months. He would steal the remote that Ross always held within Peter's field of vision and crush it, destroy the only reason he was stuck in that stinking cell for good. Or maybe he could break a window, now that he knew where one was, and swim to the surface. Or perhaps, if they even cared that he was gone, the Avengers would break in, guns blazing, and save him of their own volition.

But who was he kidding? They knew he was gone, knew he had been taken, and yet never even tried to look for him. Whenever Ross felt like reminding him of this, he turned on the television, and sure enough, there they were. Laughing and training and living life as if he had never been

there at all.

But his brain wasn't as sharp as it used to be, and his thoughts passed through sluggishly, as if they had to muscle past a thick jam stuck in his mind. He could hardly even understand the passage of time any more, but as that idea slowly processed, he realized that the guards had been gone for far longer than they usually were.

So he waited. And waited. And waited, until what seemed like hours had passed. The sharp pain in his stomach only affected him more acutely as he missed his daily meal of slop and water.

Peter sighed—he might as well stretch while he waited. Between being curled around that disgusting toilet and being cuffed to a metal chair, Peter didn't get much time to maneuver his body. He stood up slowly, painfully, and twisted the crick out of his neck. He scrunched his face into a tight knot as he raised his arms up, then let them drop. He bent his shoulders far behind him in a way that surely would have broken any normal human's bones, then twisted them the other way around.

It was as he was rotating his sliced and burned wrists and listening to them crack and pop that he heard a hint of what was said inside the doors behind him. He froze where he stood—whatever was in there must have been angry enough to shout, because that was the only way he would be able to hear what they said.

He debates his options for a second. He could either sit down and lose any shot at gaining any extra information, or he could try and listen through the crack underneath the door and risk the punishment for getting caught.

Yeah, he was never one to acquiesce.

Laying down flat on his stomach, Peter put his ear to the small gap between the door and freezing ground beneath him. For a moment, all he heard was the acheing ring echoing back to his own ears. Then, muffled, a deep voice said, “—well, we just don't have the funds!”

”Then how are we meant to keep him under control?” Asked an exasperated voice, feminine and high. By *him*, Peter assumes they meant himself.

”Recycle one of the clips you already used.”

*"Recycle*—Kuntz, that's suicide. Imagine what would happen to us if Ross found out, or worse, if the subject noticed!"

"He *won't*. He's way too drugged out to put it all together. Even if he wasn't, all blasts look the same! Just, I don't know, find the one you used for that first video and edit the color."

"You are not serious."

"Uh, I am. If you could fake the training room explosion, a bedroom should be easy. God, next you're going to ask him to actually kill the Avengers."

The conversation went on, but Peter wasn't listening. He sat back up, leaning against the wall just as he had been before. The angry voices slipped into unintelligible background noise as he tried to process what he'd just heard.

They had been—they had been *drugging* him. It certainly made sense; it explained the slow mind, the weak body, even his constant fatigue. He had no idea what they were using, but no doubt it was in the food.

But then his mind moved to a much more shocking revelation, because he surely must have heard wrong. There was no way those blasts had been faked. If they had, and the Avengers were still alive, then there had been no reason for him to stay. Peter had been tortured and questioned and treated like a rat for no reason. His suffering had helped *no one*.

All his mourning, all his tears, his crushing guilt, worthless.

Relief flooded him briefly, so strong he could have cried. Hell, maybe he did, he hardly knew what was happening anyways. Natasha, Clint, and Wanda were still alive. Peter's regret evaporated as he realized what that meant: The Avengers were whole. His friends were alive, and maybe even looking for him. They could be devising a plan to break him out right now, plotting to save him from those hard floors and angry glares and sharp knives breaking his scarred skin to reach the muscle for beneath.

Soon, though, the hope of salvation wore off. As the guards, one with a name now, grabbed him by the armpits and dragged him back to his cell, anger bubbled up in its place, filling the pit of his stomach with an almost unbearable fire that he itched to release. With no true reason to let himself be poked and prodded, there was no way he would stay docile. He was done being cut up like a

hunk of meat. He was done giving answers to everyone but himself. And he was done, *done*, with Ross's knowing little smile, the one that Peter now knew the reason behind.

He wasn't about to wait for the Avengers to figure out everything that he already knew. Peter was going to escape. And he was going to do it tonight.

#### Chapter End Notes

For everyone here that can't handle torture yet somehow made it twenty seven chapters in:

Happy day!!!!!! This whole fic is about to get a lot easier for you!!!!!!! ;:D

# I Know Someone's Waiting

## Chapter Notes

Y'all, is this good? Is it good??? This is like the climax so please tell me how it is and if it's bad how to fix it THANKS

EDIT: I just saw FUCKING endgame and oh my god. Whatever you think is going to happen is ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Btw, if it's been a while, refresh urself on iron man 2. You'll thank me

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter shielded his head as his 'dinner' flew through the door. He was half tempted to muscle his way out there and then, but he knew he would never make it out in his condition, much less swim to shore. The slop cascaded over his walls, but thankfully only a few droplets splashed onto his pale skin.

Peter unfurled himself, staring at the upside-down bowl before him. This time yesterday, he would have quite literally licked the sludge off of the walls in desperation. Even as his stomach screamed for food, though, he denied it any. If there really were any drugs in the food, he couldn't let them interfere with his plan.

Peter made sure an hour passed before he began to take action. The less alert his guards were, the easier his escape would be, so he had to wait until they were settled in and lethargic. Peter took a breath as he started to warm up and stretch out his muscles as best he could in the tiny cell. He had expected a seed of doubt to bloom in his chest, a tiny voice telling him that it would be easier to just quit, give up and let Ross just do whatever he pleased with him. Oddly enough, he felt nothing but a hard determination. No nerves, no doubts, just a need for fresh air.

Peter lifted up his shirt and sprayed a hodgepodge of webs over his abdomen. He wasn't sure how much protection they might provide against Ross's men and their guns, but some padding was better than nothing at all. Shivering as the webs slid out of his wrists, he then repeated the action to coat his back, sides, and bare legs. After rolling his pant legs back down, he surveyed himself as best he could in the pitch dark room. He looked a little bulkier than normal, but with how thin he had become already, he doubted anyone would notice.

God help them if they did.

Peter started towards the door, but stopped. After a second of debating, he bent down and grabbed the dirty metal bowl; he thought it best to take any weapon he could get.

He turned back to the door, finally ready to leave that freezing cell and never turn back. He gulped a gigantic breath, then yelled as loudly as his hoarse voice could, "Help! Please, someone, this place is flooding! Please, help!" He banged on the door with both fists, using not even a fraction of his strength to create echoing booms that the guards surely couldn't ignore. Maybe Ross would kill him tomorrow, but Peter knew that a passive death would never satisfy him. At least, that's what the guards would think, anyways.

Sure enough, not a second later the door cracked open. Before the guards could even get their bearings or realize that Peter was lying, he slipped between their bulging bodies and sprinted down the hallway. He sprinted in a zig-zag pattern, narrowly avoiding purple blast after purple blast as his senses flared every other second.

Peter didn't run into any other guards as he approached the stairway that he hoped was there, and smiled through his puffing breaths and dripping sweat. Clearly, Ross had underestimated his abilities.

He skidded around the corner he remembered from his first escape attempt, wrenching open the door to the stairwell. He didn't realize it was locked until he had ripped it off of its hinges.

Abandoning the crashing metal door, Peter flew up the steps two at a time. Flight after flight, he ran as fast as he could, occasionally abandoning his burning legs and shooting a web to pull him up a story or stick a stray guard to the wall behind him. Then, as the familiar porthole window drifted into view, what must have been ten furious guards burst in through the door opposite it, all carrying those threatening purple guns in heir hands and unbridled bloodlust in their eyes. The second they set sights on Peter, they aimed their guns at him and fired. He ducked, avoiding most, which instead blasted straight through the window, raining broken glass down onto Peter's skin. Gallons of water began rushing in, flooding the concrete floor in inches of water already, but Peter wasn't focused on that. Rather, he was focused on the one purple fireball that did come into contact with him.

The blast hit him straight in his middle, but rather than dissolving his clothes and skin like it had so many times before, it simply hit the chest plate of webs and fizzled out.

Peter looked up to stare at the men, wide eyed, and saw that they were just as stunned as he was. Their jaws hung open stupidly: it seemed like they weren't quite used to being powerless. Taking that stalled moment in stride, he threw the bowl still clutched in his fists at the biggest guard in front, not bothering to see if it made contact in favor of diving for the window. He gulped down as much air as his lungs could hold and shoved first his head out into the icy ocean water, then his slim shoulders, then his malnourished torso and right leg before one of the guards got to him. The dark water transformed his heavy bones to weightless wafers and made sharp goosebumps pop up

on his pale skin. Hope bubbled up in his chest as he realized he was seconds away from freedom. But, when only his foot was still left in the bunker, Peter felt a calloused hand reach out and grab his ankle.

Peter turned sharply and saw, through the murky water, a hauntingly smiling figure cuffing his ankle. Peter tugged, But the man held firm. Peter let out a few bubbles of air in frustration, which floated delicately out of sight; the water sapped away any form of strength or momentum. He couldn't pull away by brute force, and his lungs were already burning, screaming at him for air.

Peter wouldn't drown in the freezing depths of some random ocean. Not today, not after all he went through to get there.

He didn't let himself think about what he was about to do. If he did, he would get scared and bail out. Instead, he bent down and grabbed his own shin. Then, angling his foot against the side of the ship, he pulled as hard as he could.

Peter screamed away all of the air left in his lungs as his ankle shattered. Pain stabbed through his leg, but he was able to slip his limp foot out of the guards grip.

Tears welled up in his eyes and mixed with the dark ocean water as he shot up towards the surface, where moonlight shot down in beams to illuminate his sallow and bloodied skin, covered in gashes from where the jagged glass cut deep lines in his flesh. The blood floated gently through the water in a way that would be beautiful beneath the shining moon if he wasn't staring death in the face.

As he rose through the depths, foot by foot, Peter's lungs burned fiercely and black spots began to dot his blurry vision. He would make it, though, with only twenty feet between him and the surface left. His cupped hands propelled him upwards with one kicking leg, the other trailing uselessly behind him.

*Fifteen feet.*

His ears rang harder than ever. Pain of all forms encompassed every inch of his body, so strong he felt like his very atoms must be tearing themselves apart.

*Ten feet.*

His vision began going black, but he swam on, his eyes on the rippling surface. *I won't die here. I won't. I won't. I won't.*

*Five feet.*

Would it be so bad to drown in the beauty of the ocean? It was awfully peaceful down here...

*Four.*

He could no longer keep his instincts from taking over. He involuntarily sucked in what his lungs wished was a monumental breath of air, but instead freezing water flooded his windpipe and lungs. He tried to cough, but only more water streamed in.

*Three.*

*Please, God give me one last bit of strength.*

*Two.*

He could do this. One more push, for May, for Ben. He wouldn't throw away this life they had all died to protect.

He would make it out. Even if he died on the sand, he would know he tried his best to live another day.

*One.*

Peter burst through the surface, gasping in huge gulps of air, feasting like a starving man. His lungs still screamed, still burned as if they were full of fire instead of water, but Peter smiled as he began to tread water. Natasha, who had taught him how to fight in every environment he could dream of, taught him how to swim. She saved his life, one final time.

He turned around to gaze at the horrible, evil place that had tried to destroy him, but was greeted

with nothing but miles of blue sea. The Raft was...gone, sunk into the depths.

Well, Peter wasn't complaining. If he ever saw that hellish building again, it would be too soon. He turned again, and saw familiar lights shining in a familiar pattern. He was maybe a mile away from the New York City shoreline.

His smile widened, then dropped. With sights set on the city he had longed for for months, Peter gathered his last scraps of strength, and began to swim to those silver moonlit shores.

#### Chapter End Notes

Oh shit you guys. Oh fuck. Oh my god. I've officially passed the minimum word requirement to write a novel. I've written a novel. IVE WRITTEN A NOVEL!!!!!!!!!

## Years of Dreams Just Can't Be Wrong

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Peter hardly remembered the mile-long swim through strong, freezing waves. He seemed to fade in and out of consciousness, the ever-approaching shores becoming blurrier with every stroke of his arms or kick of his legs.

He remembered the unbridled relief as he rolled onto his back on the sand, just breathing and drinking in the stars he had missed so much. He remembered standing slowly, painfully, and openly sobbing in agony when his crushed ankle gave out beneath him and he collapsed back onto the beach. Tears streamed down his face and obscured his vision even further; he was far too exhausted to contain them.

Sleep was so, so tempting. He would give ten years of his life just to let his heavy eyelids drop closed, his body cradled by the soft sand. But something, some voice he couldn't quite place, whispered from inside him, *When you're injured, never let yourself fall asleep. If you do, you might never wake up again.* He wanted to ignore the voice and slip into the beautiful void, but it was the voice of someone he must have trusted, someone who made him feel safe.

At some point, he wasn't quite sure when, his bones had stopped sliding against one another whenever he moved and the stabbing pain that brought tears to his eyes and bile to his throat lessened to a bearable throb. He stood up tentatively, brushing loose sand off of his clothes and out of his hair, and started towards the millions of lights.

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As Peter limped through the city, he was sure he was a sight for sore eyes; his skin hung off of his wafer-thin frame like twisted silk, his dull eyes sunken deep into their sockets. Sand and blood matter his damp hair, and blood steadily trickled from scarily deep gashes that refused to heal. His torn, dirty, soaked scrubs hung heavy with shredded spider webs, which had all but dissolved into a foul-smelling paste in the hours that had passed. Pedestrians gave him a wide berth and tourists leaned out of cars to gawk at his pitiful frame.

Peter, though, kept a steady and slow pace, his eyes locked on his only real landmark; the Avengers Tower. It rose like a beacon of lights out of the steadily darkening city. Even as it swam in and out of view, Peter knew he had to make it. There were people there who could help him, patch him up and lock Ross in prison for the rest of his miserable life.

So, he limped painfully along. Every few minutes, he stumbled, his ankle sticking out at a sickening angle from his shin. Once or twice, when only groups of drunken college students were left on the streets, he fell fully to the ground, only finding the will to rise when rats began gnawing at the skin peeling off of his raw red nose.

He passed alleyways where he had taken bullets for strangers, buildings where he had webbed robbers to malls and given stray dogs scraps of his daily meal. Each street held a memory, dark or light, red or white, and it was all Peter could do to put one bare, mangled foot in front of the other. Discarded glass cut his heels and toes into ribbons, leaving a trail of bloody footprints in his wake. He hardly felt it. Maybe it was shock, maybe the freezing ground had numbed his veins.

He kept trudging.

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Eventually, what must have been hours later, he pushed open the grandiose doors to Avenger's Tower. His vision was more black than it was color, now, and he used his last scrap of strength to limp into the elevator and say, "FRIDAY, take me to Tony Stark."

No one had heard from Spider-Man in almost a year. Some news stations called this a blessing, others lamented the loss of a hero willing to step in when the police departments refused. Tony tended to side with the latter.

Tony sighed as he walked through the tower's twisting hallways, adjusting his black tie. He knew Peter was probably just flying under the radar, he *knew* that, but it didn't help to reassure his nerves that no one had seen hide nor hair of him or his alter ego. Tony had considered telling the other Avengers his real name more times than he wanted to admit, but had never gotten around to it. If someday the kid wanted to trust him again, how would he if Tony had given away the one secret that he was privy to?

Tony opened the door to the nearest conference room and threw the file folder containing newest Sokovia Compromise amendment onto a large mohagony table. Every chair was filled with one Avenger or another, he could hardly keep track any more. He had caught wind of some Captain or another that used fire to fly through space, but honestly, he had his hands full with Earth.

It was too damn late at night for a meeting, anyways.

He sat down in the only empty chair, a fancy leather thing at the head of the table, with Steve on his right and Natasha on his left. He sighed, “Alright, shitlords, let’s get this over with.”

For the next hour, various superheroes threw out their ideas on the newest amendment. Recently, Ross had been throwing the team new ideas for superhuman regulations. He had even proposed a full federal department on the topic; the Mutated Persons Control Department, of which Ross himself would be leader of. Tony cringed. Even the name sounded dehumanizing, animalistic.

As arguments fumed and agreements settled, Tony began to drift off. He thought about the venue he could marry Pepper in, the dinner he hoped to have that night, his warm bed waiting for him in his room. And, of course, Peter, who had taken place next to Harley Keener as “Young Boys Who Tony Only Realized He Really Liked After They Disappeared Into Obscurity.” He came up with the name himself.

Then, just as Sam was suggesting a total rewrite of the Sokovia Compromise, a loud *ding* signified FRIDAY’s presence. All conversation ground to a halt as she announced, “Boss, someone is asking for you. They are in the elevator right now.”

Tony laughed bitterly. Did no one understand the concept of nighttime? “Tell then I’m busy.”

“It’s urgent, trust me.”

Tony sat up straighter; alertness cleared the film from his eyes and renewed his thoughts with a sudden clarity. FRIDAY never talked about herself in first person unless it was serious. “Who is it?”

She paused. “I think you’d better see for yourself.”

Tony let his eyes sweep over the small crowd before him. Most expressions were indecipherable, but he knew exactly what Rhodey was thinking once their eyes met: *anything to get me out of this meeting*.

Wordlessly, Tony stood, walking hurriedly out of the door. Seconds later, the rest of the group followed suit.

They turned two corners, and Tony couldn’t help but wonder what wasn’t so urgent that he was

needed in the middle of the night. A constant buzzing began to fill his body, making him clench and unclench his hands to survive as he pondered the possibilities. Could there be another alien invasion? Was Aldrich Killian back and more powerful than ever? Was Pepper hurt, pregnant, cheating on him with a more reliable man that she was no doubt already engaged to outside of the tower?

A sharp ding pulled him out of his thoughts. He spread his arms out slightly, as if to shield the people that had gathered behind him in a small bunch.

The doors slid open with a quiet *whoosh*.

And there, swaying in place, bloodied and bruised, his hair cropped close to his skull and his oversized clothes torn to bloody shreds, was the person he had been longing to see for months.

Tony gasped sharply as the boy stepped forwards, one step, then two, trembling as if each one pained him. Tony noticed with a flip of his stomach that the front most foot was bent at a sickening angle.

Finally he stopped, barely a foot from Tony's rigid figure, who stood frozen in shock like the rest of his teammates.

And then, shaking and horrifically thin, he said in rough, grating voice that no one would have been able to make out had the room not gone unbearably silent, "My name...is Peter Parker."

Then, Peter's eyes rolled back in his skull and he fell forwards, landing straight in Tony's outstretched arms and staining his suit jacket with red.

#### Chapter End Notes

God made me annoying and stupid because he knew if I was pretty, driven, AND talented/likeable I'd be too powerful to stop

## Arms Will Open Wide

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Without a word to any of his teammates, Tony scooped Peter into his arms and took off running. He assumed from the frantic pattering of feet behind him that most of the others had followed.

He shivered at how *cold* the kid was, even to the touch. He shivered again when he thought about how freezing New York City was in December, and how he had only one layer of torn scrubs as protection from the biting temperatures. He tucked the thought far, far away though, just as Howard would have wanted, and kept running. He ignored his aching joints and old, weak muscles, pushed past the pain, because it paled in comparison to whatever Peter must have been feeling.

Tony didn't notice as Peter started to come to, blinking away the film over his eyes and stirring every so slightly. He was too preoccupied on mapping out the fastest route to Helen Cho that he could think of. He did notice, however, when Peter tried to stretch out his legs and gasped at the sudden stab of pain.

Tony looked down sharply to see Peter's face screwed up in distress, his eyes unfocused, confused and frightened like a deer in headlights. Tony, panting out words between gasps, said, "Hey, Peter, it's me. It's Tony, kid. You're at the Tower, you're safe, and we're gonna get you all fixed up, alright?"

Peter's brow furrowed, like he was trying to understand someone with a thick accent but couldn't quite make out their words. After a second, though, his face quickly melted back to one of confusion and unveiled terror.

Tony swore under his breath; the kid had a concussion, that was for sure, and hypothermia could be a bitch when it came to confusion. He picked up the pace.

"FRIDAY," he commanded, "Page Dr. Helen Cho to the Medbay and get a full list of the kid's injuries." He felt cold metal close around his eyes to form glasses, and sure enough, a long list of sicknesses phases into existence in the corner of his vision. He tried to avoid reading them, but words like *hypothermia*, *mild concussion*, and *multiple infected lacerations* were hard to miss. "Alright, th-thanks, Fri. Forward those to Helen."

The list shot away from his view in a blur, and his vision returned to a clear shot of red against

white.

Then, before he knew it, Helen was there, scooping the kid onto some kind of operating table and wheeling it into a sterile room.

He expected her to force them to wait outside, pondering their mistakes and whether or not they had killed someone, but instead she called, “I need Tony, Wanda, and anyone super strong in here, now!”

Everyone shared a look, but no one protested. Steve, Vision, and Bucky ran into the large room alongside Tony and Wanda, then stood anxiously in the corner, waiting for orders from Helen and vehemently ignoring the writhing boy on the cold metal table. Finally, as she scrubbed her hands up to the elbows, Helen said, “Alright, I need Steve, Vision, and Bucky on his arms and legs. Wanda, you enter his mind and try to calm him down, and Tony, you’re the only one he trusts. I need you here in case Wanda can’t hold him down.”

”Wait, wait, wait,” Steve interrupted, “*hold him down?*”

Rolling up her rubber gloves, Helen replied, “Yes. There’s no anaesthetic strong enough to sedate him. We could use Steve’s new one, but it’s untested and we run the risk of it poisoning the two percent of him that’s spider. But, anaesthetic or no, I need to operate, and I need to do it *now*. ”

”So he’s going to...feel everything?” Wanda asked, horror lacing her lilting voice.

”For the last time, yes. It’s that or he dies. Everyone, get in your posts, because I’m re-breaking his ankle in ten seconds whether you like it or not. Got it?”

Tony spared a glance at the others. Clearly, none of them ‘got it,’ if their wide eyes and pale skin were anything to go off of. Despite that, though, they all quickly moved to the table; Bucky and Vision took hold of his right and left arms, respectively, while Steve cuffed the ankle that wasn’t getting hastily examined by Helen. Wanda, her brow furrowed and her large eyes shut in concentration, put her fingertips to Peter’s temples, red wisps of light flaring from them but not yet entering his skull. Tony noticed with a sick pang in his heart that Peter was faintly whispering, over and over, “Not again, not again, not again.” He had no idea what it meant, but his stomach dropped in dread anyways.

Helen leaned over Peter and explained calmly, “Peter, my name is Dr. Helen Cho. You have a lot

of injuries and we need to operate, but we don't have any pain relievers for you. It's going to hurt a lot and it's going to feel like it's never ending, but I need you to stay as still as possible and I promise I will do this as quickly as I can. Can you stay still for me?" Peter didn't answer, still whispering his haunting mantra and weakly shaking his head back and forth, but Helen didn't acknowledge it. "The first thing I need to do is re-break your ankle so that I can set it properly, okay?"

Peter shook his head harder, faster, and before Helen could even say, "Wanda, now!" Wanda let her magic flow gently into Peter's brain. Peter relaxed noticeably, no longer writhing on the metal beneath him, but his whispers still continued, and his eyes stayed clenched shut, as if opening them would triple his already insurmountable agony.

"Okay," Helen said, cracking her neck. "On the count of three."

"One," she picked up a small hammer, blunt and metal, and raised it high above her head.

"Two," the men put in charge of holding Peter down tightened their grips—as if he knew what was coming, Pete had started to fight Wanda, thrashing weakly in their holds.

"Three." Helen brought the hammer down with a sickening *crunch*. Tony squeezes his eyes shut, but he could still hear Peter's anguished howl, piercing and broken, stab through him like an icy dagger. He heard limbs slamming against the table and faint grunts from beside him and knew that Wanda was already pushing towards her limits. Peter took a trembling gasp, the continued his haunting wail.

Tony forced his eyes open to see Helen fastening the straps on a high-tech cast, yelling over the haunting scream, "It's over! It's done, you're done, you're okay!" Peter, though, continued his cry as if she were still mangling his bones. Tears streamed from his shut eyes and flung around the room as he rapidly shook his head back and forth, trying desperately to escape Wanda's mental hold. The faces of his teammates were dripping with guilt, creased foreheads and quivering frowns plagueing the room.

Helen yelled, "Let him go! Everyone but Wanda, let him go! Tony, you need to calm him down!"

The three men immediately stepped back from the table, happy to get as far away from the scene as possible. Tony, though, leaned in, making sure Peter could see him.

"Hey, Peter," he said, and Peter's eyes opened at his name. "Look at me, I need you to look at me, can you do that?"

Now screaming through gritted teeth, Peter focused his eyes on Tony's face. Tony forced a smile. "Good, that's good. I know it hurts, but you need to calm down, okay? You're safe, this is just surgery, no one is trying to hurt you."

Peter's eyes widened in disbelief, but his screams began to subside to choked moans that grated Tony's ears. "Good, yeah, that's it. Just calm down a little more and we'll be good to go."

Wanda groaned from beside Tony and he knew her hold on him was fading. Hastily, he said, "Look, it's me, it's Tony. That's Dr. Cho, and this lovely lady is Wanda. You know us, and you know we wouldn't ever try to kill you."

Peter nodded, and quieted further.

"Then you just need to stay still and let Dr. Cho do her job, alright?"

Slowly, hesitantly, as if he could hardly even understand Tony's words, Peter nodded and stilled. His limbs fell limp on the table, and Wanda's face relaxed as she slowly removed her fingers from his head. He still moaned softly with each breath, no doubt overwhelmed with pain, but despite a flash of frantic fear crossing his eyes when Steve, Vision, and Bucky resumed their places, he was calmer than before Helen had even placed him on that table.

Tony shuddered to think that a cold operating table and hands holding him down could have induced such a flashback-like panic.

"Alright, the worst is through. Now, I just need to disinfect and stitch all your cuts and remove any glass or metal still stuck in your flesh." She redirected her sharp gaze, seemingly impartial and professional. "Wanda, you can rest now. I only need you to step in if he gets hysterical again."

Wanda nodded and slumped to the floor. From the beads of sweat rolling down her face, it was clear that holding down Peter was no easy task and she was relieved for her break.

Helen picked up a large pair of tweezers with one hand and a needle with the other and approached Peter's head. Tony pretended not to notice the way his whispers picked back up. "I'm going to start

at the arms. Tony, I need you to keep him calm and hand me the disinfectant whenever I ask for it.”

Then, with her tongue held between her teeth in concentration, she aimed her tweezers at the largest piece of debris; a thick, blood-covered shard of glass that must have been stuck at least three inches into his arm. Peter winced violently when she gripped it with her tweezers, and outright screamed when she pulled. Wanda scrambled back to her feet and resumed her work without a word.

For the next two hours, tears were shed by every person in the room at some point or another. Bucky, when a flailing limb smashed his nose in and cascaded blood down over the floor. Steve, when Helen poured alcohol over a gash right beneath his hands and Peter simply sobbed instead of screamed. Wanda, silently throughout the entire procedure, Vision...well, if he'd had tear ducts, he surely would have cried at Wanda's suffering. And Tony, when Peter escapes Vision's hold and grasped his face tightly, desperately, and whispered through sobs, “Make her stop. *Please.*”

Tony prayed that Peter would pass out, that the pain would overwhelm his mind and he would be forced to succumb to numb darkness, but he never did. He stayed awake, slowly becoming quieter and quieter until he just silently let his tears fall as Helen stitched up the last of his cuts.

Finally, as Peter stared silently at the ceiling above him, shivering beneath the men's hands, Helen wiped the sweat off of her brow and said, “I'm done.”

Everyone in the room just about collapsed where they stood, sighing in both relief and pure anguish at hearing a child beg for mercy. Helen, removing her now blood-soaked gloves, told Tony, “Would you mind moving him to the nearest hospital room? I need to get him some more blood and fluids.”

Tony nodded as if from a dream, because surely the world around him had disappeared, everything but this room of hot agony had faded from existence, and started to wheel Peter's ‘bed’ through the doorway. Sure enough, though, the hallways still stretched on for miles, the sharp lights blinded him for a moment, and every Avenger not in the room stood anxiously in the corner, watching with concerned eyes.

Tony ignored them. He ignored everything but the path in front of him, the room just a few doors down that would provide Peter with silence and comfort, and of course, the quaking teenager beneath him.

And, more than anything, he ignored the thoughts prodding his brain, the ones telling him to

wonder where Peter had been the past two months, why pale white scars peeled out from any patches of skin that weren't riddled with bloodstains, where he had gotten his clinical new clothes, and most of all, who had hurt him. Yes, he ignored all of that and continued his trek.

Tony gently pushed open the door to the modest hospital room, featuring only a white bed, a heart monitor, a small television, and an empty IV stand. Preparing himself to look at Peter and be reminded of the pain he helped cause, Tony lines up the gurney with the soft white bed so that Peter would only have to move a few inches.

He finally looked down at Peter, expecting to see barely-contained agony or unbridled anger contort his features, but they were bare, neutral. Blood and tear tracks streaked his grimy face, so thick on his skin that Tony longed for a cloth to wipe it off with, and was met with nothing but deep, dreading eyes staring at some far off point, one that Tony couldn't see.

Tony lifted Peter to the bed, and he only let loose a slight moan as his injuries were jostled, then reverted straight back to his eerie silence. As Tony moved a pillow beneath his damp head, though, Peter turned his gaze onto him. He was surprisingly serious, and his eyes were sharp, holding no evidence of the frightened glaze they had maintained for hours on end, and Tony was taken aback. Then, he whispered through cracked lips, said the heaviest seven words that Tony had ever heard: "I thought I had escaped Ross."

An icicle pierced Tony's chest, straight through his reactor core. "What?" He asked, his mind jumping to conclusions too frightening to name, all involving a malicious Ross and an injured Peter.

But Peter was gone again; the film had returned to his eyes and his face relaxed once more.

Then, before Tony could even begin to try and understand what Peter could have possibly meant, Helen hurried into the room holding bags of various fluids. She smoothly attached the tubes to a needle that she had screwed into Peter's hand and produced a moist cleaning towel from out of nowhere. Suddenly, claiming she needed to keep him calm while she washed away all remaining dirt, she pushed Tony out of the stark white door and shut it in his face, locking him away from Peter at the moment he needed to see him most.

#### Chapter End Notes

Holy shit, y'all, this thing is almost over!!!! I'm so proud of myself like wtf!!!! This is more than double the length of my last fic and way more intricate!!!! I've improved so much!!

Also I go back to school tomorrow comment something so I don't die

## I'll Be Safe and Wanted

### Chapter Notes

So....this is the last real chapter. I have an epilogue coming, but in terms of active writing, this is it. I hope y'all like it!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter wasn't quite sure how much time had passed when he became truly aware of his surroundings. The first thing he noticed was the pain, an ache that encapsulated every molecule in his body. Then, it became more acute, focused on lines and harsh points throughout his body. One second, he was lost in a daze, unsure which whispering figures around him were real and which ones were figments of his sore imagination, then the next, the white walls came into sharp focus and the ever-familiar ocean painting drifted into view.

Those deep blue waves hit far too close to home for Peter's liking. He decided instead to look down at his pathetic body.

He was laying in the same white bed as a year ago, the same white sheet covering his body. He noticed that he was not wearing any sort of hospital garb; rather, a soft blue pajama set wrapped his body in warmth, loose enough to let him move without pulling his injuries. Bandages wrapped around every exposed bit of skin he had, such a bright white that he could hardly stand to look at them. The few inches of exposed skin he could see were painted various shades of blue, black, and sickly yellow. A large cast made of some material he had never seen before clung to his left ankle, and splints held tight onto three or four of his fingers. Pain sprung from every corner of his body, piercing and aching and burning from his inside and out so fiercely that it all began to blend together.

Oddly enough, he felt better than he had in ages. He didn't know if his calm energy came from his clean skin, the safety surrounding him, or whatever chemicals were being funneled into him by the IV needle sticking into his hand, but he was by no means complaining.

A flash of hot pain and strong hands holding him down flew past his eyes in a startling haze of red. Peter blinked it away and pushed down the electric panic it induced.

Peter wasn't quite sure of what to do next. What does one do after escaping from an underwater torture prison and going through a dazed, waking operation?

He decided to call FRIDAY.

"Um, FRIDAY?" He called, and winced as his hoarse voice grated a sore throat. He moved to bring his hand up to the source of the pain, but dropped it after the movement sent an aching spike through his arm and into his shoulder.

"Yes?"

"Could you, uh..." Peter felt a bit foolish. Why was he asking a robot to guide his next move?

But what other option did he really have?

"Could you tell me where everyone is?"

"They are all outside in the waiting area. Would you like me to call them in?"

Peter jumped, then winced. They were waiting for him to come around? He wondered what they were saying—maybe they were anxious for his wellbeing, or angry that he showed back up after they had finally gotten rid of him. Maybe they hadn't even noticed that he had gone, and were utterly confused at why he had come back. Maybe he should have stayed silent and waited for someone to come in, maybe he should have gone to his alley instead, maybe he should have stayed on the Raft—

"Hello?"

FRIDAY's calm voice jerked him out of his thoughts, and he realized he had forgotten to respond. Relaxing his tense body into the mattress, Peter said, "Yes, please. If you could."

Seconds later, Tony Stark peeked in through the door. That was all it took. After so long being locked in the dark, with only the faces of people who wanted to hurt him to look at, the uncertain face of a downtrodden, middle aged man might as well have been an angel. A smile bloomed on Peter's face, so foreign and lovely.

Tony shuffled through the door to the corner of the room. When Bruce followed him, rumpled but

sure, that bloom of a smile stretched further. It pulled on Peter's injuries, but he didn't care. The relief inside of him outweighed any pain painting his skin.

After him came Clint, then Sam, then Rhodey and Vision and Wanda. With every person to shuffle awkwardly into the horribly cramped room, Peter's joy only grew. Even Natasha, in all her dark glory, brought a tear to his eye that he was too exhausted to hold back.

By the time every Avenger had filed into them room, tears shone unashamedly over Peter's scarred, bruised cheeks. He had held in his pain for long enough in that hellish prison. He didn't care how pathetic he seemed anymore.

Finally, Helen Cho stepped through the door and closed it behind her, standing professionally by Peter's bedside. He felt a twinge of danger in his spider sense from her, but knew it was just from the surgery. That, and her dark hair and white coat reminded him all too much of his afternoon 'testing sessions.'

He pushed it aside, though. In front of him were people who, if he was lucky would keep him safe. They stared at him, their faces a mixture of relief, awkwardness, and outright concern.

No one spoke for a long time. They all simply looked at each other, as if they were unable to believe that the last year of their lives had led them to this red moment in this stark white room.

Then, a weak smile still brightening his gaunt face, Peter croaked, "Hey, guys."

The room might as well have exploded.

Everyone began talking over one another. Peter couldn't make out any single voice or question over the clamor, but the booming voices increased his already pounding headache. The small mallets hitting the inside of his skull turned to jackhammers, cracking his head open with screaming pain behind his eyes and circling around his brain. He scrunched his eyes shut and clapped his hands over his ears, trying in vain to block out the noise.

Somewhere over the vocal explosions, he heard Helen's voice call from beside him, "Everybody be quiet! Please, just stop!" She repeated herself a few more times before anyone heard her, and slowly, the yelling voices dissipated into silence.

Slowly, gingerly, Peter cracked open his eyes and removed his hands from his ringing ears. He saw everyone staring at him, shame and fear painting their features. For some reason, Peter himself felt guilty, as if he had caused all the trouble. “I’m, uh, I’m okay now,” he reassured quietly.

Helen nodded in his peripheral vision. “Alright,” She said calmly. “I need you all to ask questions one at a time. I know everyone is confused, but Peter is still healing and needs as much rest as possible.” Peter felt warmth bloom in his chest at having the right people know his name. Finally, *finally*, he had said what he had needed to say to the people who had needed to hear it. His gentle smile reappeared.

“Tony, you first.”

Peter shifted his gaze to Tony, who shifted where he stood and took a quick breath. After a long moment, he asked, “Where have you been?”

Peter didn’t hesitate when he answered, “The middle of the ocean.”

Tony exchanged a glance with Steve, who stood with his arms crossed to his right. “What do you mean, ‘the middle of the ocean’?”

“Like...a prison. Underwater. In the middle of the ocean, somehow.”

“Why were you in a prison?” Tony asked, confusion lacing his voice more than before he got an answer.

“I didn’t want to be,” Peter scoffed, then coughed weakly. “Ross’s guys didn’t give me much of a choice.”

“Wait wait wait,” Steve cut in, “Ross put you in a prison after you left?”

“*Left?* He took me from my bedroom in the middle of the night!”

Tony butted back in, hints of desperation and frustration deepening his wrinkles and contorting his voice. “Hold on, we have a video of you leaving the tower. Alone.”

*What?* Peter blinked harshly. “Well I don’t know why, because thirty guys in black shot at me and threatened to kill all of you unless I came quietly. I didn’t, by the way,” he added on quickly, sparing a quick glance to Clint and Natasha.

“Hold on—“ Bruce piped up as a few voices began to rise over one another. “Just—Peter, why don’t you just tell us what happened from the start. And no one interrupt.” He shot an accusing look at Tony and Steve, who grumbled quietly and looked away.

Peter nodded. He let his eyes sweep the room, felt the confusion swirl the air and hoped to clear it. He took a deep breath in preparation, steeled himself to relive the last two months of his life. Then, he opened his mouth and began.

For almost half an hour, Peter explained the depths of agony he experienced, from the drugged slop splattered over the walls to the monstrous doctor in cold human skin.

He detailed the extent of the torture he endured; the knives cutting deep crosshatches over every inch of his skin, the hammers breaking and re-setting his bones until they splintered through his muscles. The burns coating his hands and face, the ones he dreaded to see in a mirror for the first time. He had felt them, though; the reformed skin felt soft, like fragile velvet, stretching over half of his face, neck, and entire torso.

As he went on, he expected to falter, to ask for a break. He thought this retelling would be hard, but it was so, so easy. He felt like a faucet, and Bruce had just turned a knob. His recounts came streaming out of him like water, and he didn’t know if he could stop even if he wanted to. Even when his breath faltered as he retold his fear at seeing the fake explosions, he never stopped talking. The faces in the room varied between suspicion, shock, dread, and guilt as Peter detailed every bit of information he could remember since he had last been in this building.

Finally, almost half an hour later, Peter finished, “...and then I took the elevator up here, and it’s all kind of blurry from there.”

Peter looked up. The Avengers had all now sat down, draped themselves over the hard chairs, on the floor, perched themselves on the edges of Peter’s bed and nightstand. Even Helen leaned against the plastic headboard beside her. And they were all absolutely floored.

Tears shone fresh over Wanda’s face, but her hands barely contained a fiery red in their tight fists. Natasha looked murderous, and so did Clint, who had so often reminded him of a happy-go-lucky

dog. Even Bruce seemed to be fighting down inches of green, creeping out of his sweater and up his neck, down his wrists.

What seemed like hours later, though it couldn't have been more than a few seconds, Tony spoke up. His face was weighed down in heavy guilt, but his tight mouth and quick breathing betrayed barely-contained fury. "That son of a bitch lied to us."

Every head turned to him. No one disagreed. "Ross faked the footage of you running away so we wouldn't look for you. And I bought it!" Tony stood up and began pacing as best as he could with bodies all around him. "I gave up on you, I didn't even try to find you! I saw matching code and I just went with it!"

"Hey, Tony, calm down," Bruce urged, trying to take his hand and bring him back to the floor. Tony jerked it away and continued.

"And God, look at what happened! He took a law *we created* and manipulated it to—to *torture* Peter! I'm going to kill him. I swear to God, I'm going to kill him."

Peter thought he would be upset at the idea of this, that he would be like every other hero, but now, Peter wasn't so sure. Maybe Ross didn't have to die, but he had to pay for what he did. Peter's face hardened in determination.

But Tony's voice started to rise, and it wasn't long before Helen began to usher everyone out of the room. But just before Tony left, Peter called, "Wait!"

Tony stopped, looking straight into his sad eyes. "Tony, can you stay for just a minute?"

Tony nodded, but didn't speak. He stepped away from the doorframe and let the remaining Avengers pass him. Finally, after Natasha had left and closed the door, Peter waved Tony over.

Peter began to feel exhaustion weighing on his limbs, trying to drag him down into the depths of darkness but excitement and determination still coursed through his blood, holding him aloft to the light, so he grasped Tony's wrist and whispered, "Make him pay."

Tony nodded, but Peter held firm. "Do you promise?" He urged.

Tony nodded harder. He swallowed hard and forced, “Yes. I promise.”

Peter took a breath and released Tony’s hand, reassured. “Good.” A sob jumped out of Peter’s throat even as a smile spread over his face again. “Good. Thank you.”

Without another word, Tony hurries out of the door, Helen with him. The door shut with a click, and Peter leaned back on his pillows, exhausted. An odd giggle escaped his chest, and he stared at the ceiling. The laughs continued, and Peter didn’t even try to hold him back. He didn’t want to.

Finally, after almost three years, Peter was safe. There were scars on his body and in his head that would never truly heal, but Peter still just smiled as waves of contentment washed over him. Ross was gone. The red was gone. And Peter was forever wrapped in white, holy, pure, *safe*.

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The door shut behind Tony with a click.

No one was in the hallway. He didn’t have to ask FRIDAY to know where they had gone.

Tony stormed down to the weapons room, past hallways he barely saw and voices he barely heard. He felt almost numb, now. Drained. Guilt and fury and dread had flushed him out, and all he felt was cold.

He slid open the door, and sure enough, there the Avengers all stood, as if they had been waiting for him to arrive. Maybe they had. Tony didn’t much care.

He didn’t even say hello. He shoved past everyone to the gun rack. No one tried to stop him. If his red vision wasn’t warping his surroundings, their furrowed brows and tense muscles made it seem like they were just as out for blood as he was.

Instead, Natasha joined him, the rest of the Avengers following soon after. She pulled a pistol off the wall, grabbing a chamber as she asked, “Now what do we do?”

But she knew. Tony heard it in her voice, which shook even as it said it's hard words. He saw it in her eyes, black with rage and unfulfilled justice. In her hands, which expertly placed the chamber into the gun. She knew exactly what they needed to do.

Tony grabbed a gauntlet from the wall, thrust it onto his hand. Natasha turned the safety off of her gun with a loud *click*.

"We avenge him."

#### Chapter End Notes

Ohhhhhh my god pls comment

## Epilogue: Finally Home Where I Belong

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

In the end, Tony didn't kill Ross. He wanted to obliterate every last speck of that monster, but he knew that once Peter cleared his mind, he would regret asking someone to take a life. So, Tony took photos of the still-bloody scenes that made him gag in his helmet and sent Ross to the cops. He was their problem, now.

That didn't stop him from getting a few good hits, though, and Ross entered a life sentence with a few more bullet holes than normal, courtesy of Natasha.

When he returned to the Tower, he did find Peter to be grateful that he had spared Ross's life. He understood; heroes had enough blood on their hands. They didn't need to add any more.

Eventually, after a few days of being bed bound, Peter could walk to the other side of the room and back. It reminded him of his days spent blind, where he had to clutch at Bruce's elbow to keep from falling out of a window, but he found that much less frustration came with this version of healing. Maybe it helped that he knew he would recover again. Maybe, once you spend two months alone in a torturous prison, any alternative feels like heaven. Even a hard mattress and grueling physical therapy.

Weeks later, Peter was almost completely healed. Now that he was being fed, he found it much easier to heal like he had before, and he could jump around a room with no trouble at all. His skin still stretched in fragile chemical burns that never seemed to fade over sections of his face and torso and harsh white lines criss-crossed every inch of his skin, but Peter didn't mind. He tended to avoid his reflection, anyways. It looked far too much like Ben.

Soon, he moved back into his permanent bedroom, which had been upgraded to feature a climbing wall and a miniature laboratory. Bookshelves covered almost every spare foot of the wall in colorful, geometric patterns like the shelves Peter had seemed about as a child. And in one corner, nothing existed at all. Nothing but a small sign that read 'WEB ME.'

Peter didn't leave his room for three days.

(One of those nights he woke up screaming and could hardly move for what he dreamed were cuffs holding him down. He didn't mention it to anyone but FRIDAY.)

One day, as he walked down to get breakfast, he noticed his senses gently prying at his tired body. They didn't feel like a warning of danger, though, just a sign that something was about to change.

Peter hurried quicker to the kitchen, hoping to find out what as soon as possible so that the electric current in his blood would fizzle out.

He all but burst through the kitchen doors, and sure enough, the calm scene of three or four Avengers talking and reading over bacon and pancakes was null. Rather, everyone stood tensely, anticipatedly, staring at him like he was walking into a surprise party that they weren't quite sure he would enjoy.

He wasn't sure if he liked the feeling.

"Peter," Bruce started from where he stood in sweatpants and an old t-shirt, and Peter noticed a contrast from his casual clothes and his ceremonial tone, "we, as a collective have made a decision. You have passed every stage of recovery, and even though we didn't give you specialized training, I think you've definitely proven yourself strong enough to take on an alien or two."

Tony picked up from where Bruce ended, and if it weren't for Peter's mounting anticipation, he would wonder if they had rehearsed this.

"So, we've been talking it through ever since you came back, and we've decided you're ready."

Peter realized what was happening a moment before it did. "No way..." he whispered underneath his breath, but a goofy smile spread his scarred face even as he said it. "Guys, no way."

"Yes way," Steve said, who had seemed to have taken a liking to him once he got over Ross's betrayal.

"Kid," Tony said, handing Peter a folded piece of red and blue fabric, light and cool against his fingers in a way that signified a newly made suit, "You're an Avenger now."

And so the story goes. By day, Peter trains with the Avengers and begrudgingly homeschooled with Bruce. By night, Peter pretends not to wake up in tears and instead patrols the city the moment the

blade jerks him out of his nightmares.

But not every dream has to be a nightmare. Not every dream has to be bad. Sometimes they're just bizarre. Others, they're heartwarming.

And sometimes, once in a blue moon, a dream becomes a day in the life.

#### Chapter End Notes

Hot damn. This is over now, huh? This fic I've worked on for months is just....done. I've worked so hard to make this the best it can be, and now it's over, and it's the best thing I've ever written.

Damn. I'm proud of myself, and all of you for making this journey twice as fun.

This is MaryaD, signing off on In My Dreams.

#### End Notes

Buckle up, babes, because this is gonna be another long one. My life is bonkers rn so updates may take longer. Maybe not. Wish me luck

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